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NILE TO ALEPPO

HECTOR DINNING
AND
JAMES McBEY



Indianapolis
August 30, 1957.

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NILE TO ALEPPO



BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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"He has a notable literary gift."—*Morning Post*.

"He has seen strange things with intensely keen eyes."—*Daily Express*.

"He is a vivid writer, with a keen eye for detail, and a direct way of setting it down which grips the attention."—*Times*.

"He sees things with fresh and observing eyes, and he has a most receptive mind."—*Punch*.

"He can write."—*Sydney Bulletin*.

"He has a striking literary gift."—
ARCHIBALD STRONG in *Melbourne Herald*.



James McBoyle Damascus
5 October 1914

THE SILK BAZAAR AT DAMASCUS

NILE TO ALEPPO

BY

HECTOR DINNING

CAPTAIN, AUSTRALIAN ARMY

ILLUSTRATED BY

JAMES McBEY

NEW YORK

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1920

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TO
THE LIGHT HORSEMEN OF AUSTRALIA
AND TO
THE HORSES
WHO STOOD BY THEM
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

FOREWORD

SOMEONE ought to come forth from amongst the Light Horsemen of Australia and reveal them. This book will not reveal them ; it is too personal. In any case the writer has not the faculty for revealing them. They scorn publicity ; but someone ought to give it them—not for their sake, but for the sake of their Nation. Our Infantrymen in France have got to be known in the world. For one thing, they fought beside Englishmen and Americans and French who acknowledged their worth and made it public. English acknowledgment of them alone has spread their fame. Most generous praise they have had from British General Headquarters. Nothing of the sort have the Light Horsemen had from a similar source in Egypt. Books have been written about our men in France. A party of English journalists was once invited to come and live with the Australian Corps there. The praise given by them was almost idealistic. Our Force in France has had Australian correspondents with it ever since it moved there ; it was not until late, when the Sinai

Campaign was over, that the Light-Horse got publicity through a correspondent. It is true that correspondent was appointed in time to do justice to their great dash in the last phase of the war in the Middle-East. But all the nobility of their work in that hard and breaking desert campaign went unrecognized at the time. And that was the great work—the work that alone made possible the final spectacular and triumphant sweep up to Aleppo and out to the Haurân.

So the popular notion grew outside that the Palestine Campaign was a “picnic.” The legend goes that a troop-ship bearing Diggers home from France, passing through the Canal, hailed the Light Horsemen on the bank: “Ullo, you blokes! Bin ‘avin’ a good picnic out ‘ere?” “Aw, not too bad! jest bin moppin’ up the ——s that cleared you orf the Perninshuler!”

This rejoinder connotes the Light-Horse attitude of mind. Only thus indirectly and facetiously can they be got to own the importance of their work. With the native modesty of the true horseman, they are dumb as to the epoch-making nature of their work. They are a modest people, these men of the Bush. They are in many ways an unsophisticated people. They have no readiness to seize on the spectacular aspect of the campaign. They are plain, blunt men, lean, level-eyed, loving their horses, careless of danger, careless of the

detail of discipline and of personal appearance, turning a sardonic face to monotony and hardship. They have no historical sensitiveness to the traditions of their battle-grounds. It was nothing to them that Napoleon had traversed Sinai and fought where they fought ; it was of more importance that their horses should have water and food enough. They were indifferent to the traditions of Jerusalem : it was a dirty, avaricious city that gave them fruit and a respite on trek. Nazareth, Bethlehem, the Plain of Armageddon, the Dog River, they accepted as they found and not for what they had been. The history of the Crusading campaigns they did not know and did not care to know. The chariots of Sennacherib had swept over the plains they were covering ; but what was that to them ? They were a people to themselves, with a language of their own (distinguished even from the tongue of their brethren in France), with work to do and horses to care for, camps to pitch, Turks to extirpate. The history of the Jews, the tale of the Ottoman race they were combating, interested them not at all. But though thus insensitive to the historical significance of their campaign, they were deeply alive to its bearing on the World-War in which they were involved. They cared nothing for its setting in time, for its place in the series of campaigns in this country ; but not a trooper was ignorant of

the tactics of the war in Palestine as a whole, nor was not prepared to show Allenby his next move on the map.

I cannot tell the story of these lean, modest, brown, free masters-of-horses. This book may help to give a notion of the kind of country they lived in after Sinai, and of the great towns they rode into during the final advance, and of the Cairo they knew in respite from the dust and boredom of the Valley. Someone with John Masfield's power of suggesting character ought to suggest the Light Horseman to the world. I cannot do it; but I can and do dedicate this book to him and to the horse that is a part of him.

It is a great pleasure, as well as a great privilege, to use Mr. McBey's drawings for this book. He is known to most Australian Light-Horse Regiments; very few of them have not "put him up" as he moved about Palestine and Syria doing his work as the official artist with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. Light Horsemen were in general familiar with the sight of his car, moving pretty fast, bearing a spectacled figure beside the driver, and, in the rear seat, "Tonks," the midst of a mountain of rations, artist's gear and cooking utensils. James McBey dwelt amongst Australians as one of them. He studied them and drew them. Many of them will talk to you on their own initiative of

his sketches and of his criticism of the brass and carpets they had squandered their substance on in Beyrouth and Damascus. Mr. McBey requires no introduction to Australians who served in Palestine—and less still to the English who served there. Before this will have been read he will be known more intimately to the Australian civilian public for his work in that counterpart to the *Anzac Book*, *Australia in Palestine*—though it would be ridiculous to suggest that Mr. McBey's reputation is affected by anything so accidental as this souvenir-book from the field. The fact is, of course, he was known to both soldiers and civilians in Australia, long before there was a war, by his etchings. This is a far better book because his drawings are in it.

An acknowledgment is due of the courtesy of the Committee of the Imperial War Museum in granting permission to reproduce some of Mr. McBey's sketches in their possession.

H. D.

CAIRO,

May, 1919.

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BOOK I
GOING EAST

CHAPTER I

TARANTO

FROM the Taranto Rest-camp (sweet euphemism !) you must get a pass to visit the town. This you must get up early for, and stand in a queue of incredible length and eagerness ; for there are four hundred and fifty officers in camp and only twenty-five *per diem* can go. The queue forms before nine in the morning—long before. It is dealt with at nine—i.e. it is *begun* to be dealt with. Such is the monstrosity of life in this Rest-camp that officers will rise at most unhallowed hours to be dressed and ready to stand in queue. Many are called ; but few are chosen. Hordes of them are turned away from the office, too late to be included in the happy twenty-five—who saunter about camp smiling triumphantly and brandishing the magic pass, and have no pangs of regret for the breakfast they have missed in their successful efforts to get a day's liberation from the noisome camp—that abode of heat, dust and flies without end, number or degree.

Their pass tells them that they may not visit Taranto "in shorts," nor remove their belts in restaurants; in camp they wear nothing more than shoes, socks, shorts and shirt. Few wear collars or tunics, even to meals. But the change of atmosphere which Taranto brings easily compensates for this enforced, unaccustomed harness of breeches, belt and collar.

The camp provides them with transport to the town at eleven, two, and three—a converted motor-lorry, garnished with forms; a means of voyaging which blisters the seat and enshrouds one in a pale mask of dust. For the road is almost intolerably dusty. The dozing drivers of carts are clad in the grey mantle of dust which covers vines, hedges and houses along the white route. It is as dusty as the drive from Cairo to Mena. But this place is like an Egyptian suburb in many ways. Beside Egyptian dust there is the flat-roofed, sun-coloured Egyptian house with the severe outline. The carts are Egyptian in design and move at an Egyptian pace—with most of the drivers asleep, full-stretch on the floors of them. The heat is Egyptian. The denizens are dressed in the sparse Egyptian garb and approximate very closely to the Egyptian complexion.

The town is separated—the old from the new—by the narrow harbour-mouth, which a single bridge spans. If you go by the morning char-a-banc,

you take a walk in the old town before the horde has retired to its midday siesta. *Horde* seems the word : they are as thick as ants. The intricate network of alleys, skirted by tiny hovels, is much like the honeycomb of the Egyptian bazaars. The old town is crowded on to a peninsula, skirted by a wide, stinking quay-road. Within that road is the maze of alleys which, robbed of the clear sea air, smell to a degree which you are spared on the quay-road. As you wander about these alleys, beneath the drying garments on string lines which darken them, smoking steadily the strong Tuseano which you bought on entering, the inhabitants stare at you with a kind of resentment. You may be dusty ; but you are obviously not dirty. It would almost seem that they resent anything not filthy finding a place in the midst of them. But they are not too resentful to beg—that's how they demand you pay your footing in this squalor. Mothers suckling their filthy infants on doorsteps beg from you ; they send their filthy children after you to beg—their children whose faces are smothered in sores ; ragged old men, half-blind, solicit from you. You give nothing. If you did, you would be harassed by a queue of beggars the rest of your journey.

Most of the women are for all practical purposes naked to the waist. For that it is hard to blame them, in heat of such intensity. To suckle their

young means no disarrangement of garments, and quite the majority of them are engaged in that maternal duty. It suggests the rate at which they multiply. And one is amazed at the youthfulness of many of these mothers, though in a land where sexual development is obviously (on all hands) so precocious, there is no ground for real amazement. But what they and their offspring live upon is the insoluble question. They give the impression that it is little enough. There is emaciation, and the ubiquitous sore on face and limbs, which, while its origin may commonly be venereal, would seem to be due, also, to a combination of malnutrition and the unswatted fly. This is where procreation ought to be restrained—if that were possible. . . .

It is reviving to get a glimpse of the lovely Adriatic as you emerge for lunch in the new town. The new town, with its openess and its breeze off the sea, is like emancipation. There you may sit in the Bologna Restaurant and look upon clean, cool food—and clean, cool women, too, who are lunching there as well. Coolness is the mark of the decent Italian girl: whether she is sitting at a meal or walking in the afternoon street she always bears with her the aspect of refreshing coolness. It is partly in her white dress, partly—if she is walking—in her dignified and unhurried gait. This climate has at least done that for its women—taught them

to walk with a cool and graceful deliberateness that is refreshing to look on. There is nothing of the hasty, ineffectual, mincing gait of the London girl. The Italian girl never hurries. She wears no corsets, and this accentuates the definiteness of the movements of her limbs. She dresses in white, affecting that kind of skirt which "you think you can see through, but you can't"; and with her stately movement and swaying, unstable bust she progresses, rather than walks, across the Piazza.

But we were at lunch, and not on the Piazza. . . .

There is no meat eaten in Italy that I can see—though there probably is some that I do not see. The Italian in restaurant dines on soup, fish, macaroni, a little poultry on occasion, fruits, iced wine and coffee. This seems, anyhow, a fitting diet—and one that satisfies even the beef-eating Englishman when he finds himself in the heart of it. There is nothing of the scarcity of food that is apparent in London restaurants. The Italian civilians are alleged to be rationed in sugar, bread, macaroni and oil—and coupons for these are actually issued by the Government. But anyone can get any of these commodities in plenty at any restaurant without presenting a coupon.

They serve you enough macaroni in a soup-plate for a meal, with a patch of tomato-sauce in the midst of it and grated cheese by your side.

But the satisfying effect of macaroni is evanescent, as you discover by the time the fish is arrived. How to eat macaroni like a Christian is the problem. After five minutes' floundering amongst it—with nothing done—you look about shamefacedly to see how the native does it. The method of the native is not necessarily that of the Christian. But he gets it down. There are rare Italians who eat macaroni artistically by an ingenious and inscrutable twirling manipulation with the fork. But this obviously cannot be learnt in a day—as you discover on trying to emulate them. But the normal Italian—the Italian who is hungry ; and most Italians seem to be hungry always—fairly buries his head in it to minimize the distance between plate and mouth, and, making one act of it, does not rise until the dish is finished. The long shreds move in a kind of continuous procession into his working jaws. The fairest signorina does this. This method is doubtless very effective and very satisfying ; but the Englishman usually ends by mincing the dish with a knife and fork and then consuming it leisurely on a fork without a shred to embarrass him. . . .

The wines and fruits of Italy are unforgettable. The *vin ordinaire* of a French restaurant is unforgettable in another sense. But the Italian *Chianti ordinaire*—that which stands as a matter of course upon the table—is very good wine indeed.

And the fruits—who shall describe the fruits of the Italian summer? If you have macaroni and *frutti assorti* you need ask for nothing more. After London, it is the plenty of the fruit, as well as its quality, which amazes you. Now, for 5 *lire* (a *lire* is worth 5½d.) you get such a meal; and it includes a prodigal dish of fruit which in London would cost you £2—a luscious heap of peaches, apricots, plums, pears, melon and figs. The figs are the *pièce de résistance*—great soft, purple, bursting things, as large as apples. And if you want more figs they are brought—and no addition to your bill.

Between lunch and four o'clock you sit in the garden, or at the café in the Square, eating ices. It is but fitting that the vendor of ices in Australian streets should so frequently be a "Dago"; for it is the Italian who knows how to make ices, as it is his country that knows how to grow figs. In London, in war-time—and this is no fault of London, where sugar and cream are almost unprocurable, except for military hospitals—you get nothing but the insipid water-ice. Here you get ice cream—and that without limit—chocolate cream, vanilla cream, lemon cream, coffee cream, and what not. They bring it with a glass of iced water, or they bring, in the manner of the Egyptians, coffee with iced water. The one is to pander to your palate; the other to quench

your thirst. And you may be sure that, in the summer of Southern Italy, you are always thirsty rather than hungry.

No self-respecting woman moves out of the shade of her house before four, unless she has to. Indeed, the best of them do not emerge before six. But onwards from four o'clock you will find they begin to throng the streets. Many of them are taking the air before going to the Alhambra, where the first performance is at five-thirty. For many of them this is too early for walking; so they take the air in "gharries." The "gharry" of Italy is a sorry vehicle, with a sorry nag. By comparison with the Cairene gharry, with its rubber tyres and fast-trotting pair, it is a poor conveyance indeed. But with these they are content; and there they sit, with the Eternal Fan, eyeing the populace with that aspect of voluptuous—almost exaggerated—ease with which they walk.

The little girls of Italy are very beautiful, with their dark complexions, dark eyes, dark hair, dark legs, exposed far, far above the knee and showing much more limb than they would be prepared to exhibit at seventeen. Little girls of twelve in Italy dress as "high" as the little girls of France or England would be allowed to dress at six. They are stouter in the limbs than their contemporaries of Northern Europe, giving promise of that definiteness of outline and

deliberateness of later movement which is a natural characteristic of women in a land whose temperature makes perennially against effort and haste.

In the streets of Italy there is a refreshing absence of the obvious street-walker. The "glad eye" is not offered in that habitual fashion which oppresses you in the streets of Paris. At the same time, the impression is strong that the women and girls of Italy are by no means sexually starved. But the relaxing climate of this voluptuous land probably has the effect of disinclining its women against the arduous pursuit of adulteries. Italy has its brothels; of that there is no doubt. But even the prostitutes of Italy are not going to weary themselves in the business of street-hunting, any more than they will weary themselves by industry of any other kind.

The women after middle-age become rather gross and coarse-fleshed. There is a whole army of middle-aged women who are gross in body, too, with guttural voices, which would appear to come from that most considerable part of them—the paunch. The young men of fashion and the clerical sort are effeminate in manner, and they wear many perfumes. In the streets are many dogs, and most of them have sores.

The Alhambra is a theatre that stages a play, as distinct from *revue* or a variety entertainment.

When we entered, the play was half an hour overdue to begin. I once thought the informality of the French provincial theatre could not be exceeded. It was exceeded here. There was an orchestra for rendering music between the acts. It was about forty strong. There was a conductor who entered and sat at his stand with his hat on. The audience, which was weary of waiting for the play to begin, clamoured for music. In a loud voice the conductor told his band what to play, and, without attempting to remove his hat or to conduct them, or even to rise from his chair, started them off with a wave of the hand, shouting the Italian equivalent of "Carry on." They carried on, exchanging snatches of facetious conversation between themselves as the music proceeded. It proceeded somewhat perilously, with the rhythm a little ragged; but since the performers appeared to be enjoying themselves, the conductor evidently believed their main object was being achieved, and maintained his conversation with a lady friend in the front row of the stalls.

When their "piece" was finished the gentlemen of the band, without any obvious permission to do so, put on their hats and left the building.

The play was still far from ready to open. Behind the curtain could be heard the noise of leisurely hammering. At irregular intervals workmen on the stage thrust their heads through the square

doors in the curtain and regarded the audience with a steady gaze. Others thrust their heads out apparently in search of friends in the gallery ; and when they had found them, exchanged homely greetings with them in no muffled tones. These were presumably the workmen who were preparing the stage for presentation.

After fifteen minutes the band began to dribble in again, but not with the intention of doing any more before the play began. They had "done their bit" in the way of overture. Instead, they beckoned their wives and their children beside them, lit their cigarettes, and began to dandle the youngsters amongst the music-stands. The children enjoyed themselves very much. So did their parents.

By this time the audience was getting honestly impatient. There commenced a scraping of feet and a sporadic clapping, which soon culminated in a thunder of ironical applause. The only response from the stage was that the hammering grew a little louder and a little more irregular, and that the workmen thrust their heads through the curtain at more frequent intervals. But they did not protest against the impatience of the audience. On the contrary, it appeared to divert them. They encouraged the house to more noisy efforts by approving grins.

It was a very poor house. A bigger might have had another effect on the stage-workers. The

stalls were half full. Three boxes were occupied. The dress circle may have contained forty people, the gallery half as many. Most of the audience consisted of Italian sailors with their girls. The sailors were on half-day leave. The performance was chiefly designed for them. There was a handful of English officers and privates. At last the curtain rose with a kind of rush. The applause was deafening. The band contributed a good deal to it. The family-gathering amongst the band was prepared to enjoy itself thoroughly.

The stage disclosed the living-room of a poor Italian family—the mother, father, youthful son, and two daughters spending themselves in outbursts of sordid and noisy quarrelling that alternated with eloquent spaces of gloomy silence. Of the daughters, one curried favour with her ill-tempered parents by whining exhortations that they should pull together in the hope of something's "turning up"; the other, a girl of spirit—and an extremely handsome one in her rags—reviles them all for lazy louts, and warns them that if they don't "do something" they are very liable to die of starvation. For her part, she's going out to "look for something." She does so to some purpose. A rich American becomes enamoured of her in the street and asks leave to accompany her home. She introduces him to the family with some reluctance. His passion dictates to

him the plan of shipping them *en bloc* to his own country and there finding them employment.

That closes the first act.

The band here puts away its cigarettes and its children and performs a selection, under the baton, from *Cavalleria Rusticana*—and performs it most admirably. It did not appear, from what had gone before, that this undisciplined band could do anything so thoroughly well.

The second act changes the scene—with a somewhat rude disregard of the Unities—to the flat of the wealthy American. The family has mysteriously changed its rags for garments that are a little incongruous with its manners and deportment—incongruous except in the case of the spirited daughter, who had, of course, even in the midst of her former poverty, been one of Nature's peeresses.

But there is the complication of a well-established mistress of the mansion. His wife was a factor the American had, in the first throes of his new passion in Italy, refused to reckon with.

The plot was just beginning really to thicken with the rising suspicions of the wife when we had to leave. The speculative reader must unravel the not-too-subtle complications of the plot for himself. We couldn't stay to do it. If we had, this sketch might never have been written, for the last *char-a-banc* leaves town for the camp at eight. . . .

As we walked through the town it was entirely delivered over to the promenade. The whole populace had dined and was taking the cool evening air. The road on the quay-front was almost impassable. The Italians, like the French, promenade *en famille*. Those that were not walking were seated round their doors eating fruits and ices. But by seven o'clock you would find the streets as deserted as at two in the afternoon. They retire early ; for they begin their day early.

CHAPTER II

TRANSPORT

WHY does a Brigadier on transport consider that to sit all day aloof, intent on a novel, is the only thing for him to do? We have six Brigadiers on board. With a curious uniformity they all—not one or two—comport themselves so. Each has his deck-chair, a flapping label attached, in the shade of the boats; and there he sits, thoroughly bored and self-contained, from nine till one, from two till four, from half-past four till eight. The trick began as soon as we embarked. We came aboard to find the six of them enseoned, reading like mad. The rest of us spent half the day exploring the ship, with that interest in the boat you're to sail in that is only human. And if we did sit, we could no more keep our eyes off the harbour and the passing stream of passengers on deck than we could have read a book. But the Brigadiers both sat and read. This is the end of our second day out. Other passengers are beginning to read. But I've seen the Brigadiers do nothing else—but eat—since we

came on ship. And I am sure they will do nothing else till the end. If we were submarined they would probably think it *infra dig.* to move before finishing the page. If General's rank carries with it the obligation to uphold its dignity by showing so little interest in life, let us remain subalterns till the end. . . .

A subaltern can be *blasé* enough. Coming across the Alps, from Aix-les-Bains to Turin, three of my carriage-companions were subalterns. In the heart of that grandeur, two of them slept consistently for six hours, and the third read *Nash's Magazine*—every page of it, I think—the whole morning without bestowing more than an occasional uncomprehending glance at the torrents and valleys.

It may therefore be nothing more than the ladies on board that keeps the subalterns from reading like any General. The ladies are twenty nurses. They are not all handsome girls, but most of them have American vivacity. Not even the American tongue is enough to keep the subalterns from pursuing them. "Pursuing" seems the only word. If one goes to the piano she is literally mobbed. There is an obvious competition to sit next them at meals. Officers play the most unchappish mutual tricks to get each other out of the way: they circulate fables to their fellows about imaginary parades for officers in other parts of the ship, about imaginary orders just

posted in the saloon, and what not; and they appropriate the damsel so liberated. But most of the lady-hunters have grown wise to this kind of thing. They don't move now to join in these parades unless they first observe a general movement with that motive. Orders can wait to be scrutinized till later on. . . .

At night, at the promenade on the boat-deck, you are at first amazed that there is only one man to one woman. But this is doubtless the result of the more persuasive, or the more brazen, or the more fortunate, having "fixed it up" at some stage of the day . . . and certainly beneath the boats and in darkened nooks of the deck there is only one man with one girl—though it is hard (in some cases impossible) to distinguish man from girl.

What is the connection between sea-going and a propensity to this sort of thing?

But at one end of the boat-deck, about eleven o'clock, there is no such intermingling. The ladies have had the deck-end roped off into a kind of *crèche*; and here they appear *en bloc*, late in the evening, white-robed, to sleep. Either the fear of torpedoes below deck or the heat of the cabins—or both—has driven them to take this extraordinary course. For extraordinary it is, when you consider the herd of males it attracts to that part of the ship at bed-time. They peer greedily into the

semi-darkness. But it's little they see—though they hear a good deal. . . .

There are five hundred officers and nurses on board, and many more men. The transport is a P. & O. liner. She is travelling alone as a transport, but there is one grey Japanese destroyer ahead and two on the flanks. Yesterday the sea was as smooth as a pond. You could have spotted a periscope a mile away. To-day the white horses are leaping on every side—a good sea for submarines. But the ship herself is as fast as a submarine, and the precautions are sound. Our wake is a smooth, erratic zigzag. At each corner of the bridge is a turbaned Hindu gazing out. At short intervals along all the decks the submarine guard of Tommies is doing the same. Five blasts on the steamer's whistle at the most unexpected and embarrassing times in the day call us to our boat-stations, where we languish half an hour, hunched in our life-belts. And woe unto him whom the ship's adjutant, in the vigilance of his erratic rounds, finds lounging without a belt. The six-inch gun in the stern and the mortars on the lower deck for casting depth-charges are reassuring evidence of precautionary measures.

One does not covet the lot of the officers and men of the merchant service who spend all their days out of port on this sea, sown with mines and infested with the deadly sea-serpent. They

deserve all the credit they are given, especially if they have had an experience of shipwreck by torpedo. The associations of that rending of timbers, and of consternation, and of perilous lowering of boats, and maybe of drowning cries and of the engulfing of the ship that bore them—these die hard. Continuous service in the face of this potential peril is hard on cooks and stewards. But the strain on engineers and stokers, in the bowels of the ship, is harder. The torpedo is almost certain death to them—by scalding, by drowning, by torn limbs in the hideous explosion. They live in fear of the lurking peril all day—and all night too, if there's a moon.

But the appointments of this ship are so luxurious, and the service so elaborate, that you might be travelling in the face of no graver danger than that from fogs and storms. It does not readily occur to you that that spacious and polished dining-saloon and that plush-upholstered music-room, and the luxury of the smoking-room, and the well-bred comfortableness of the cabins are liable to be smashed and sunk any day. The dusky Hindus wait on you with a courtesy and quietude that is alien to the troublous times of war. And, I may add, they serve to you food that is alien to the penurious rationing of war. After the meagre rations of London there is something prodigal in the plenitude of beef and mutton,

sugar and white rolls, fruits and vegetables, pies and pastry that are set before you at table. There certainly is refreshment in these days in the snow-whiteness of bread, in the liberty to have as much sugar as you like in your coffee and on your melon, in the prodigal pats of frozen, creamy butter—as distinct from margarine—in the generous saddle of mutton. . . . But such is the fare with which a generous British public is supplying us on this Mediterranean voyage. But we don't dispute that if this were other than a P. & O. steamer we might be faring worse.

No lights show at night. You dare not show a cigarette end on deck lest—as the printed warning reads—you be delivered into the hands of the Admiralty authorities at the next port of call for endangering the ship. (In fact, you dare not throw your shaving-paper out of the port-hole in the morning lest it be found in your tracks!) There is, therefore, *multo majore*, no open port at night. The dining-saloon at the “second sitting” is stifling. It is a thoroughly deceptive breeze created there by those forty-two electric fans. The ventilation is purely virtual; all they do is to stir up the foul air. And if you ascend to the music-room after—which overlooks it in the form of a verandah—you get it worse, despite the twenty-six fans there. So after dinner and coffee in the verandah you bolt for the deck; and

hardly a music-room concert will bring you down from there.

In the cabin (where the same deceiving fan is whirling) you sleep in a kind of stupor. And all that withholds you from taking your blankets on deck is the fact that they swab at half-past five.

Really, I'm not due to inhabit a cabin. It's pure good fortune. Were it not that the M.L.O. who put us aboard that K-lighter (the kind on which we evacuated Anzac) to bring us to ship was an Australian, I should have been sweltering at nights with the subalterns in a hammock on the troop-deck. I was the only Australian embarking; and whatever be their failings, Australians on service are always "good coppers." "I'll fix you on board," he had said to me as the lighter panted to the ship's side. On ship he was allotting cabins to an interminable queue of officers in the music-room. They were crowding round him to smotheration in their eagerness to get "fixed"—majors, captains, lieutenants—"the whole mob," as they say. "Clear the place a bit," he said to the ship's adjutant. "Right ho!—All lieutenants in the saloon may as well clear out at once," bawled the adjutant; "they haven't a dog's chance of a cabin!" But I do not blush to say that when he had worked off his queue that gallant and brotherly Australian took me below by the arm and said with a grin: "Will this do?"

BOOK II

PALESTINE AND SYRIA

CHAPTER I

THE ROAD OFF LEAVE

RETURNING from leave to France you go from Waterloo. That strikes with pity the heart of the most callous—that multiple leave-taking at Waterloo. There should of course be no leave-taking at Waterloo: that should be faced in privacy—in the flat, in the hotel, in the home. But women will go to Waterloo—and what is more, will get platform tickets and wait till the last moment, when the train moves off relentlessly.

At Cairo there is no such heart-shaking pathos. There is, if anything, a touch of jollity. But chiefly there is a very matter-of-fact hauling of baggage along corridors and settling into corner seats—if there are any left—and sporadic perusal of magazines or the *Egyptian Mail* or the *Palestine News*. After all, these men are only returning from leave in Cairo: there is no wrench of parting. Rarely you will see a little reluctant parting with a girl who is not English. But because she is not English it is rare for her to care enough to come

to the station to see the last of the soldier she has seen intermittently (in the evenings) the last ten days. But there are rare cases of real attachment—usually rather one-sided—even amongst girls who contribute to a temporary Cairene relationship during a man's leave. In such cases the farewell is short and intense, highly charged, to the passionless onlooker, with a physiological significance. As it expresses itself so, it will be short-lived. The girl may remember it for a night and a day—hardly longer—only until the memory is blurred by fresh adventure. The man obviously remembers it not more than half an hour. You can see that from the way he settles to his absorption in the “literature” he bought on the platform.

Some men have friends in the English Colony. They sometimes come to see him off. It is not an anomaly to see Englishwomen blooming in the exotic atmosphere of Cairo: it is too frequent to be strange. But somehow it is strange to see English girls saying good-bye on the Cairo platform. Everything makes against its congruity. The Arab porters are bawling exhortations to their friends and conciliatory replies to their impatient employers. “Yallah!” and “Awah!” resound beneath the domed roof, in the mouths of the porters; and “Imshee!” and “Ighry!” in the mouths of soldiers. The vendors of light literature and cigarettes and cakes importune tire-

lessly and inaptly—and “get badly knocked back.” “Inglees Pairpah! Magguzine! *Gypsen Mairl* to-morrow!” (“Yallah!”) “Ciggurette! Inglees ciggurette! Ciggurette, Sair?” (“Im-shee!”) “Cairk! you want to buy cairk, Sair! Half piastre! Very good cairk!” (“Yallah! you —!”) Importunity meets with little politeness. The boot-boys are there—as though anyone wanted to have his boots brushed returning after leave. “Brussha-boots, Sair?” Frequently the boot is “put in” in response to this. I have known hawkers try to sell pigs’ trotters and live fowls at the evening train for Kantara. “Eggs a-cook!” “Two for a half!” are frequent cries. “Limonade! Limonade! Shoklut! Ficks! Lot-trie!”—they hawk anything in Cairo.

Native women are bundling into the hard-seated, ill-lighted third-class compartments with their amorphous lumps of luggage and their wide-eyed children. French officers, Italian officers, tarbushed Englishmen in the Egyptian Civil Service, Egyptian merchants with the paunch and the full check of prosperity, are elbowing for seats. There are fellahcen landowners with lean, well-defined features. You spot their provincial authority by the white head-band and the fine quality of their robes. French and Greek and Italian and Jewish business men are arriving in unobtrusive tweed. Officers of the Army of the

King of the Hedjaz are strolling the platform, their white flowing Bedouin head-dress incongruous with their khaki-drill tunic and Sam Browne belt; priests of the Greek Church are there, going to Jerusalem, in pure black robes, high black hats, venerable beards appended to features that are far from venerable. There are soldiers of the Jewish battalion with their lady friends.

There is no harm in English girls from Ma'adi making one more variety in this cosmopolitan throng. But if you exclude the military element the crowd is so thoroughly masculine and so largely Oriental that the Englishwoman seems a kind of intrusion. But she doesn't often come. So she doesn't often hear the impolite rejoinders to hawkers nor the ungentle exhortation of porters.

The train leaves at a quarter-past six with its motley load. If it is summer you have a little daylight in the Delta country. If not, you are tearing through the lighted suburbs of Cairo with a carriage full of dust. You get dust in summer too. There are so many level crossings and Cairo sees so little rain that the ride through outer Cairo is filthily dirty. You see "all sorts of things" in upper windows—and in lower ones too. Whatever the ladies of Cairo may fear it is not *déshabille*. They rarely close their windows above the ground-floor to dress—or to undress. From the window or the little balcony of the Cairene flat you may see

wonderful sights over the way any evening before dinner or before bed. In this respect Cairo is the paradise of the furtively lewd-minded. Peeping Tom would have had no need to peep in this city. Godiva is simply not affected by his frank gaze.

There is no time for frank gazing as the train flashes past.

As you recede from Cairo you are entranced by that wonderful spectacle of the lights of Cairo. Some people have talked and written lovingly of the lights of Folkestone, of Boulogne, of Sydney—even of London. But nothing more beautiful will you see in nocturnal illumination than the lights of Cairo from the Delta. They dance. In some parts of Southern Europe they glitter. Here they dance. I do not know what are the atmospheric reasons for this. What I do know is, that it is very beautiful. I don't think you will ever see it in England. It would be out of keeping there, anyhow: too flippant. It "fits in" with Cairo—with the free, voluptuous notion of an Egyptian night. This beautiful vision is too soon fled from the train. If you want to gaze your fill on the lights of Cairo, go some evening (next time you come on leave) to the Pyramids. You can sit there (without the slightest fear of embarrassing lovers) for an hour. If you wish it you may stay longer. You probably will wish it.

The passengers by this train do not become

very intent on the lights of Cairo. Most of them are very busy with their "literature" and with calculations as to how long it will be before the first sitting at dinner. In fact, if you go into the dining-car now you will see a large number of officers generating an appetite by that most common of all *apéritifs*—the whisky-and-soda. There is a fierce *ennui* in the East which makes it intolerable for most men to sit doing nothing on a railway-journey. If they are not restlessly reading magazines, they are swallowing whisky-and-sodas. Some you will find doing both. The Englishman has not the temperament which becomes infected by the Eastern spirit of contemplation. He drugs his brain with spurious journalism and his senses with spirits that are often spurious too.

There is rarely a woman in to dinner. But there are plenty of civilians. The Compagnie Internationale des Wagons Lits can tyrannize over you without fear. It "has you, every time." Even if you are not too dignified to be caught eating a sandwich in the carriage, your coming journey is such that you will get nothing to eat worth mentioning until you get to Jerusalem to-morrow after midday. Though you ate a hearty tea before embarking, you had best have a dinner on the train. So you pay through the nose, and get a very unpretentious meal for about eight shillings.

It is customary (and even advisable) to sleep



Samuel Wesley
Kantara 24 Feb 1917.

between dinner and Kantara. Consequently it is rarely that you see anything of Benha or Tel-el-Kebir or Ismailia. You would see nothing but the station if you kept awake.

You get to Kantara about ten-thirty. So beautiful is the Canal at night that you curse yourself in crossing it that you have dulled the edge of appreciation by gorging and sleeping in the train. The light-spangled Canal under the moon holds a kind of magic which, when you are normal and have not just arrived jaded at Kantara, you will not forget. But "as things are," your chiefest desire is to get to the train at Kantara East and crawl into your bunk. If you are a colonel you will get there quickly—in a car. If you are a subaltern you will spend a long time in getting a Gyppo porter (they all seem to shy off that late train from Cairo), who will chuck your baggage into a motor-lorry designed for that purpose. You will climb in clumsily after it. For half an hour, waiting to start, you will gaze unintelligently on the Canal at your side: you may even resume dozing. Then your vehicle will bump heavily across the pontoon bridge and lumber its way on the other bank to the sand-smothered station, where the train is waiting in semi-darkness. If you are wise you have wired the R.T.O. Kantara East to reserve you a berth on the train. If not, you sleep on the floor. But wherever you sleep

you are probably "off" before the train starts at twelve-thirty. You do not sleep so soundly that you are not wakened many times in the night by the dust and soot that invades and by the roughness of the route. The dirtiest railway journey in the world is surely that from Kantara to Ludd. The carriages are of low clearance; they pick up the dust over which they travel. They are open at either end; your hair and face and blankets get messy. And if it is winter you are wakened by the cold as well.

You have two hours' ride through Palestine before the first stop at Bir Salem, where G.H.Q. has its abode. Sinai you have traversed in the darkness. The part of Palestine you now traverse after dawn is rich in autumn colour. The Palestine autumn is very dry—thirsty for the winter rains. The ground about you is parched: crops are withered in the red earth. But this very dryness in the crops gives you the beautiful brown-and-gold colour in the distance. The plains and hillocks of the Maritime Plain are burnished: it is the only word—burnished. This golden colour, upon the red earth, gains a richness in the glow of the early morning that leads you to forget utterly the filth of the train and the pathos of the parched soil beside the track. The grey boulders of the hillocks and the white strata of rock in their flanks are only enriched by their barrenness. But there

is the added contribution of the irrigated orange groves and the deep dull red of the roofs that stand on white walls in their midst. In spring the burnished colour of this parched land will be changed to the voluptuous gayness of the garment of wild flowers. But beside this rich severity and depth, all that spring prodigalness will be cheap and fleeting.

At Bir Salem you will remember the groves of fir and the waiting queue of cars for G.H.Q.—waiting at the edge of the road paved with wire-netting to make the deep sand negotiable. From Bir Salem to Ludd you pass the tented colony of G.H.Q. Prominent in that colony is the garage of box cars. The faithful “Florrie Ford” is there by the dozen ready to fulfil behests. The Ford is the King’s Messenger *par excellence* in this land of sand and rock and hills and wadys.

At Ludd you step on to the platform six inches deep in sand—unwashed, unshaved, in arrears with sleep, thoroughly jaded and dispirited. If Ludd were other than what it is, you might soon outlive your depression. But Ludd is a raucous conglomeration of noises and super-crowded traffic. The congestion of cars, lorries and G.S. wagons is perennial at Ludd. Canteens, Y.M.C.A. tents, mineral-water factories, hospitals, pumping stations, M.T. depots, ordnance dumps, supply dumps, ammunition dumps, field-bakeries are thrown to-

gether at Ludd in a congestion that will be depressing in memory for ever. There are starved olive groves struggling for an existence in the midst of all these ; and you are depressed further by dreary lanes of cactus that zigzag between the dumps.

You eat a cheerless breakfast of eggs and bread and jam in the N.A.C.B. tent and emerge on to the howling, haggling native market, arranged semicircularly round the mob of held horses—held by filthy waleds—that paw the sand and swish the flies that torment them in myriads.

The Arab women, squat on their haunches, will sell you figs, melons, pomegranates and grapes—if you are willing to give what they ask (which is doubtful)—to solace you on the journey to Jerusalem. You take them, in the midst of the flies and horsedung, from the foul hands of these hags and plough your sand-impered way to the train. This is already super-crowded. So you sit on your kit, fortifying your mind and removing your coat against a five-hours' jolting journey.

From Ludd to Jerusalem, once you pass Ramleh, you lose all the colour of the Plain. Ramleh stands picturesque beneath its minaret and crumbling Crusaders' Tower that is a landmark for many leagues. Probably there will be aeroplanes turning about these erections ; for the Plain of Ramleh is a home of aerodromes.

The Ramleh siding is the haunt of many hawkers.



Little James Bridge, Road - Sea

July 1916

John W. B. 1897

It is the Bedouins who hawk here ; and they will hawk to you wherever you stop before reaching Jerusalem. The children expose themselves indecently to carry their wares—raising the robe in front to form a pocket for grapes. The girls and women are lean-featured. Some are distinguished-looking ; but only as to feature. About their occupation there is nothing distinguished—except distinguished avarice and importunity. Their noses are large and well-formed. They have good chins, which are lent undue prominence by the tattooed beard. There are a million wrinkles of exquisite fineness on brow and cheek. They stuff the fruit into their blouse above the waistband. This upper half of the garment seems, by its enormous capacity, to have been built for the purpose. It protrudes and depends far below the girdle—so that the impression is given of a superpendulous bust of enormous proportions. There are a few old men selling too—carrying isolated bunches of grapes in their skinny hands. One is not tempted to buy much from these people. It is probably fairly safe to buy ; but the person of the vendors gives you the feeling that you would taste cholera in their wares. All the grapes have that suspicious shiny appearance that gives the impression of spit-and-polish and constant handling.

You climb up round the hills of Judæa through country intensely monotonous and intensely barren.

Ravines and hills clothed in boulders or pocked with caves or streaked and pied with erratic strata are all you see until you are on the fringe of Jerusalem, when some red-and-white dwellings and straggling orchards come upon your view. From the station you see little of the city. But as you drive to the Fast Hotel you rise to the ridge that has been hiding your view, descend, and climb towards the Jaffa gate.

Jerusalem, to most Australians, has been the merest haven in transit. It is that only for them, either going on leave or returning. They are not far-famed for the historical feeling. The English are that: they come from a country where not only the Tower of London and Fleet Street and the Mitre Tavern are expressions of the past to be approached with reverence, but where every village has its own historical atmosphere, and it is "the thing" for its natives to return to it again and again and do it reverence and poke about its Church Register for details of their forbears. Australians have not the historical habit. But if they had, they would find Jerusalem a discouraging place for its exercise. You cannot conceive a city whose traditional atmosphere is more dissipated and defiled by its modern denizens. Inhabitants of Jerusalem have robbed it of its venerableness. It is not enough for you to say you should be able to ignore modern Jerusalem

and look beyond its modernity. The filth of the city you could overlook ; but you cannot escape the filthy utility by which the Greeks, Latins, Armenians and Mohammedans have transformed the ancient Holy Sepulchre and the Temple Area and the Mount of Olives and Gethsemane into a source of gain. The Holy City is infested with glib showmen who have no feeling for the past. They have smirched it all with greedy flippancy. There is nothing sacred to them—much less have they any historical respect. One could forgive them for ignoring the religious past of Jerusalem ; but there is no forgiving their flouting of Jerusalem as a historical evidence. To look on a sketch of the Temple Area is to get a far better notion of its significance than to go about it—at any rate, with a guide. I have seen a charcoal drawing of the Mosque of Omar that meant far more to me than the visit I paid it. I was repelled by my tour of the Holy Sepulchre ; glad to return to the hotel and read *The Times*. After that I was more than content to look down on Gethsemane from the city wall. I have been about the Colleges of Oxford with old servitors who made the past live, though they made the same tour daily. A Beefeater has shown me about the Tower of London, and I felt he respected it. But the effect of a guided tour about Jerusalem repelled me unforgettably : it was as though I had wit-

nessed an exhibition of moral perversion : that, at the most ; at least, of mental sordidness and vulgarity : it was like having the folk-songs of Sussex transliterated into ragtime on a gramophone.

Who can blame the Australian—who at the best requires his historical sense to be nurtured—for failing to be interested in a tour of Jerusalem sufficiently to repeat it ? He will return to the Fast Hotel, drink cooling drinks, and talk to Cæsar.

Cæsar at any rate is interesting and honest ; and he recalls such good days at the Continental in Cairo. The Continental is honest : there in the midst of modern Cairo it makes no attempt to ape an Oriental atmosphere. There is no quasi-Egyptian decoration about it. It sets out to be a good modern hotel—clean and luxurious—and it succeeds. It is such a haven as a good modern hotel in Paris or Rome. And Cæsar was its head-waiter—a perfect master of his art. He was given the choice, on Italian mobilization, between military service and the domination of a military hotel at Jerusalem. He chose the latter—and the more useful—form of military service. But how he is lost and wasted there ! He is too great a man to find scope in a poky hotel in Jerusalem. Nothing less than the Continental is a fair field for him. There he never forgot a name, a face, or a room-number. He never forgot the habits of a single patron. He knew whether this officer





Jerusalem
1875

when last on leave needed eggs and coffee in his room in the morning—or a mere jug of iced water. And such details he remembered accurately for all his scores of patrons from the Jordan Valley. Under Cæsar there never were bungled arrangements for mixed dinner-parties: he never was capable of a *faux pas* when the company was seated. He was the good genius that guided the destinies of all dinner-parties. But what can he do tucked away in a fifth-rate pub in Jerusalem, where a mixed dinner-party is not to be thought of? However, he can see you get a good “male dinner”; and he still remembers whether you take French or Egyptian coffee, and whether it’s a cognac or a mixed chartreuse you’ll have with it.

But, as I say, Cæsar is chiefly useful to the officer returning from Cairo as a companion in reminiscence and as a suggestive genius who can make him live again, for an hour, the delicious, full-crammed leave at the Continental from which he is just returning.

Next morning he takes the road by car from Jerusalem to Jericho. It is a blazing track down the dip of Gethsemane and up the long hill that leads to the entrance to the Judæan wilderness. If he can see behind him the walls of the city through the dust, he is lucky. From the crest beyond the Mount of Olives the gradual descent begins—along the shafts of road which, joined by

the steep hairpin-bends, resemble nothing so much as the graphical representation on a malarial chart, as you look down on them from above. Queues of lorries labour up past him; staff-cars rattle past and leave him enveloped and asphyxiated for long minutes in the glaring, motionless air. The topographical feature that breaks the dusty monotony is the climb up on to Talaat-ed-Dum, past the Good Samaritan's Inn. Then he comes upon Desert Mounted Corps Headquarters perched up on the roof of the wilderness commanding the Valley of the Jordan. The Mount of Temptation is a wart on the left; the burning valley sleeps under its haze before him; and away down on the right, decipherable only as a kind of lighter haze, lies the Dead Sea under the mountains of Moab.

He makes his way through the colony of Ford cars, signallers' cycles and horse-lines to the mess of some friendly spirit "on Corps," and gets refreshment to fortify him against the last descent to Jericho.

The monotony of the zigzag road is re-entered. The stony ridges of clay once more swallow the road. Even the arid openness of the Jordan Valley prospect is now denied him. He must stifle amongst the hills until he creeps, by the Nebi-Musa road, into the level valley itself and makes for the little pile of rubble that is Jericho.

CHAPTER II

JORDAN VALLEY

It is inevitable that in France and in Palestine soldiers should draw comparisons between their respective fields. This is often done with scanty knowledge. Sometimes the Light Horseman bases his comparison on the letters of his cobblers from France. The Infantryman's judgment is often founded on his somewhat garbled knowledge of Palestine as he pictures it from the Scriptures. Both are typical sources: both are inadequate. The Australian is no letter-writer: the Scriptures are grossly misleading as a means of visualizing the kind of country Australians find themselves inhabiting in the Holy Land. The Australian is not good at giving a suggestive picture on paper of his physical surroundings. He will sometimes give a graphic picture by word of mouth. On paper he is inadequate—terse without being graphic. The Scriptures, on the other hand, idealize the land of Palestine. It was a symbol to Old Testament writers of all that could be set up over against

the Land of Bondage. A sort of intense patriotism and intense religiosity made them figure the country as a land such as the Egyptian Expeditionary Force does not find it.

But, apart from such Hebrew idealism, there is an actual and a wide difference between the Palestine of sacred history and that we fought in. Dean Stanley has analysed and accounted for this difference with much lucidity. "The countless ruins of Palestine" (he says, in *Sinai and Palestine*), "of whatever date they may be, tell us at a glance that we must not judge the resources of the ancient land by its present depressed and desolate state. They show us not only that 'Syria might support tenfold its present population, and bring forth tenfold its present produce,' but that it actually did so.

"And this brings us to the question which Eastern travellers so often ask, and are asked on their return: 'Can these stony hills, these deserted valleys, be indeed the Land of Promise, the land flowing with milk and honey?' "

He says there are two answers to this question. In the first place, the destruction of the woods of ancient Palestine and the neglect of its husbanded terraces have been followed, on the one hand, by a diminution in the rainfall, and, on the other, by an increased denudation by such rain as still falls. The celebrated ancient forests

of Hareth, Ziph, Bethel and Sharon are gone—with a result analogous to the general change of climate in Europe which notoriously followed on the disappearance of the German forests. The recent testimony of residents of Jerusalem is that, in their experience, the Kedron has only once flowed with a full torrent, and that that was obviously in consequence of the enclosures, on a grand scale, of groves of mulberry and olive made in the last few years by the Greek Convent.

Secondly, to the ancients—and notably to the Psalmist—Palestine was fertile by comparison with its desert surroundings rather than in itself. The apparently extravagant praise of Palestine was written with the notion implicit of the barrenness of Sinai and the Haurân. Old Testament writers knew well that by comparison with their country Egypt was rich. But they knew Egypt was “artificially” rich—rich by virtue of the Nile only. Take away the Nile, with its irrigation, and where are you?—as it were. “But Palestine is well distinguished not merely as ‘a land of wheat and barley and vines and fig-trees and pomegranates, of oil, olive and honey,’ but emphatically as ‘a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of plains and mountains.’

“‘Not as the land of Egypt, where thou sowedst thy seed and wateredst it with thy foot, as a

garden of herbs ; but a land of mountains and plains, which drinketh water of the rain of heaven.' This mountainous character ; this abundance of water both from natural springs and from the clouds of heaven, in contradistinction to the one uniform supply of the great river ; this abundance of milk from its cattle on a thousand hills, of honey from its forests and its thymy shrubs, was absolutely peculiar to Palestine amongst the civilized nations of the East."

If a modestly fertile English county were transplanted into the midst of a desert, it, too, would shine by the comparison—as Palestine shines in the language of the Old Testament.

There are one or two notoriously gross illusions about this country held by people who have not lived there. So much is heard of the dust and heat suffered in the campaign in Palestine, that outsiders are amazed to learn how cold and how wet it can be.

"The 'voice of the Lord' made itself heard in storms, bursting suddenly out of the clear heavens, preceded by violent hurricanes—the clouds with their thick darkness almost seeming to touch the ground—the thunder, heard, not, as with us, in short and broken peals, but in one continuous roll, as if joining flash to flash without interruption. 'He bowed the heavens and came down, and there was darkness under His feet. . . . He rode upon

the wings of the wind. . . . The Lord thundered out of heaven, and the Highest gave His voice ; hailstones and coals of fire. . . . The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire.' ”

Even on the plains the cold of winter is intense ; and those who were at Es Salt beyond Jordan in the first fighting there are baffled in any attempt to describe the rain and the noisome mud that afflicted them. The mud is worse than the dust, they will tell you. And that is a bold saying.

But all they say of the dust and heat of summer is true. There have been some famous photographs taken of the Jordan Valley dust. As you stand on the foot of the Judæan hills you will see innumerable whirlwinds of dust spinning to heaven all the day. There are hordes of them in an almost unnatural frequency—huge, whirling columns moving slowly over the face of the valley. But it is the dust-cloud raised by the wind or by transport that chokes and blinds the moving troops. Men in rear of a mounted column will see nothing either side for hours, and scent nothing all day but the dry, strong smell of powdered earth that parches them. They are powdered ashen ; and by the end of the march they feel the ghosts they look. They become callous to dust. In passing along an Australian road you will hold your breath and close your eyes until the dust of a passing vehicle is cleared. Here it is bootless to attempt

that; the dust never clears. You have to come to terms with yourself to suffer it and be indifferent to it. Your hair is whitened by it; it has covered your body beneath your clothes; you feel the grittiness of it upon your limbs; your eyes are clogged; your lips hold ridges of thin mud the saliva has made; your ears are filled; there are furrows of mud in the creases of your shirt where the sweat has caught and congealed it. But you cannot better it. You've got to "stick it."

Even when you are dismounted and bivouacked the wind drives it in clouds beneath your ground-sheet. Sometimes you sleep all night in a cloud of dust. Your blankets are laden with it. When you rise in the morning to breakfast your food is incontinently covered, and you bite grit. It is like being, week-in week-out, in a mild *khamseen*. Some Light Horsemen have resigned themselves to a life of dust until the war ends in Palestine.

There is dust on the roads in France; but only on the roads, in general; and it is in sporadic clouds, that clear. Here there is dust over the whole landscape. Here you would soon asphyxiate if you tried to evade breathing it; and if you closed your eyes to it you would be permanently blind.

It is true that mud lasts longer in France than in Palestine. But while the winter rains in Pales-



House No. 1
21

DESERT OF SINAI

Chas. W. W. W. W.

tine are descending, the degree of mud here is as great as in Flanders. The rain, in the season, in Judæa and Moab is more heavy and continuous than in Flanders. There is no drizzle here, as in France, for weeks on end ; but a steady downfall which throws roaring torrents into wadys and spreads sheets of water over the lowlands. You can wrestle with the gentler, steadier rains of France. Whilst the rainstorms of the season last in Palestine you are well-nigh helpless. Water-spouts suddenly arise above the sheeted water in the valleys and tear across the ridges, uprooting whole camps in their career. When Cleopatra and her train came to winter in Jericho, you may be sure they dodged the rainy season. You may be equally sure they never ventured there in summer, to wither beneath the fiery, blistering blasts of dusty wind. For Jericho must have changed in its atmosphere and fertility even quite recently. One almost imagines it must have changed during this war. Jericho is not now the pleasant oasis celebrated by last-century travellers. This is not the Jericho we know : “ It is not only, or chiefly, to the torrent stream of the Kelt that Jericho owes its oasis. A little to the north of the issue of that stream into the plain rise out of the foot of the same limestone range two living springs—one now, as always, called Dûk ; the other, and larger, as well as more celebrated, now called the Spring

of the Sultan or of Elisha. From these springs trickle clear rills through glades of tangled forest-growth which, but for their rank luxuriance and Oriental vegetation, almost recall the scenery of England. '*As You Like It*,' says one of the most graphic and accurate of Eastern travellers, 'was in my head all day.' It is these streams, with their accompanying richness, that procured for Jericho during the various stages of its existence its long prosperity and grandeur."

If you stand at midday beneath the Mount of Temptation you will see the whole valley swimming beneath the flickering heat-haze. The whirlwinds of dust rise out of this mobile glare that trembles beneath the hills of Moab. It sometimes blots out the straggling green fringes of the Jordan; sometimes it hides from you the Dead Sea itself. The mountains of the Judæan wilderness—in which the scapegoat languished—are baking behind you. The liquid haze of heat rises from their flanks, blurring their outline. The clay ridges about you—so like the barren *sierras* between Anzac and Suvla—lose their sharpness. Until the middle of the afternoon, all of Palestine that you can see in the Jordan Valley writhes beneath the shifting glare. But towards sundown the whole land takes on definition. The wadys are cleared; you can see every detail of their tortuous length wriggling down into the Jordan bed. The Gallipolean ridges

of clay show the striations that the torrents of winter rain have made. The regular strata of the Judæan hill-sides are revealed. The meandering green of the Jordan banks leads clearly down into the Dead Sea. The sea itself, foiled by the lovely purple colour of the hills of Moab, shows its richness, sleeping in the evening light. You see now all the valleys of the Moab hills that could not be distinguished when the sun was high. Then those hills were an amorphous mass of burning higher ground, that was higher than the plain and nothing more. Now you see the pleasing irregularity in height and the fine deep colour of the gorges. The Plain of Jordan, at evening or at morning, is transformed to a degree that is incredible if you have not seen it. It goes to make life bearable to the Australian imprisoned there.

If he is camped on the banks of the Jordan, he bathes. He may even get down to the Dead Sea for a bath. Some soldiers will dispute the point as to whether it *is* a bath you get there; for it is true that you emerge covered with a kind of precipitate. Unless you wash in fresh water after, you become encrusted when dry. It is uncanny to find yourself able to stand in ten feet of water and have your head and shoulders out. But so you can in the Dead Sea. If it were not for difficulties of balance, you could sit in it. You

can, momentarily, such is the extraordinary density of this chemically surcharged water. It is difficult to sink the limbs low enough for swimming: you have the grotesque sensation of being literally pushed out of the water.

This is not the bath that cleans you—though it is alleged to be good for septic sores. There is a story of a man shot in the foot and isolated on the shore of the Dead Sea. The wound became gangrenous. He had heard of the healing properties of this water. He kept his foot almost constantly immersed until he was found four days later. The M.O.'s judgment was that but for this immersion the man would have died, so fast does gangrene spread.

No; the Dead Sea does not cleanse, except in this special hygienic fashion. The resting troop in France can contrive to get a regimental hot bath. This is unknown to the regiment in rest in Palestine.

But this is only one aspect of the contrast between rest in France and rest in the Valley of the Jordan. It is usual for a resting battalion in the West to emerge into pleasant country. There are woods and streams, pleasant walks, pleasant villages, with shops and *estaminets*: in a word, civilization. The regiment that goes into rest in Palestine gets a change of location, but not of environment; it is the same desert, the

same blistering winds, the same dust. There is no variety—no company of villagers to move amongst. Above all, there are no women. The infantryman in rest not only gets served with French beer by French girls, but he becomes absorbed into French domesticity. He becomes the friend of a French family—plays with the children and has meals *en famille*. The Light Horseman in rest may see one Bedouin hag in a month. This starvation of women's society in Palestine is the most pathetic thing in the lot of the Light Horseman. Nothing establishes more clearly the strength of the complementary attraction of the sexes than the distressing effects of sexual segregation in Palestine. There seems little doubt that half the debility of the Jordan Valley is due to the unmitigated masculinity with which the Light Horseman is afflicted.

But yet his cheerfulness is astounding. Conversation in bivouacs is not flabby; far from it. There is a great deal of argument of a virile sort—not such as you expect to hear from men exposed habitually to the onslaughts of monotony, physical hardship and sexual segregation. The dialogue of cooks and batmen, especially, is vertebrate in the extreme. But their hardships are less. The officers, too, contrive to rise above *ennui*. But maybe their hardships are less still. They have their mess (often rough enough), with its better

fare, its bridge and poker, its "reading matter," and the superiority of their quarters.

People in France will say : " This sexual segregation of the Light Horseman is checked by his Cairo leave." This is a sad fallacy. It presupposes that one speaks of a mere physiological segregation. The starvation that is so pathetic is the deprivation of the society of women (not of their mere contiguity), such as the Infantryman gets in England—of women with whom one can talk and go about and spend a week, in the house, in the garden, in the fields, in the city—in short, of the women who can be a man's friends. With a few exceptions that are negligible, the Light Horseman knows nothing of this. The English colony in Cairo is small. Every Light Horseman cannot have friends in it. Only a very few can. Light Horsemen in Cairo are reduced to each other's company and solitary walks and excursions. They have had enough of each other in the Valley of Sodom and Gomorrah. Excursions would be better worth taking if they could have a woman to be their companion.

Consider the leave of the Infantryman who goes to England. It is a rare Australian in France who has not friends already in England when he arrives, or does not soon make them. Most Infantrymen are embarrassed in choosing which English family they will stay with. The Aus-

tralian has had a welcome in England for which he can never be grateful enough—except in those cases in which it has turned his head. But they are few : the Digger bears the generosity and the multiplicity of his welcome pretty well. Either by accident or by introduction, then, the Infantryman has got the friendship of English families ; and, having that, he has a priceless possession.

The Australian who makes his friends in the provinces of England cares little for London and its stock sights and theatres. He is more than content to spend a week roaming the gardens and the lanes and villages of England rather than in pursuit of the feverish pleasures of the city. There he basks in the bosom of the English family whilst his comrade of the Light-Horse mopes about Cairo or sits vacantly in the Esbekieh gardens, or makes excursions to Gizeh or Sakkhara with his fellow-soldiers that are dull by comparison with those made by the Infantryman about the villages of England with the girls of England.

The fighting in France may be more intense and more incessant. It is. But the Light Horseman would welcome more intense fighting as a deliverance from the hideousness of Palestine monotony. The Infantryman may see more “stunts” ; but he does live. Whether in the line or in rest or on leave, he lives at a level

that delivers him from himself. The Light Horseman does not. The Infantryman does not need to sap his strength in war against malaria ; he need not even be on his guard against those minor pests of the desert, the viper and the scorpion. His proportion of death in battle is higher. The Light Horse proportion of non-fatal body-wounds is higher. But the Light Horseman would reverse the proportions with alacrity if only it would deliver him from a life of monotony and desolation.

THE PLAIN OF AJALON



CHAPTER III

LUDD TO DAMASCUS

IN France you are safe to risk picking up transport from any point to any point, such is the multiplicity of mechanical transport and so short are the distances. Before the advance in Palestine of September the distances there were quite negotiable; but when the cavalry swept north of Damascus, movement by road became alarmingly slow and laborious. In fact, supplies and other stores began quickly to be sent by sea from Port Said to Beyrouth and pushed in to Damascus by rail and motor convoy. Damascus was cut off from Ludd, except for occasional mechanical transport units whose business it was to move to Damascus area for duty.

So I took my chance of transport from Ludd to Damascus in October. But by luck I stumbled across a motor ambulance convoy going to Beyrouth by Damascus next morning. Rising before the sun is—and should be—depressing. There are glib and popular half-truths about the exhilaration

of rising with the sun. But no smug moralist has ever gone so far as to commend you to get up before it. It is such an inversion of the order of nature to rise before dawn that the spirits droop and the mind is grey and cold. Especially is this true in the austere land of Palestine. It needs all the glory of the dawn to dissipate the baleful influence of the dreary pre-dawn hour. The immensity of Palestine openness to the heavens lends no sense of shelter to the spirit at this early hour. In a mountainous country you could claim the sheltering friendliness of valleys and clefts in the hills until the day arrived. But in the unsheltered spaces of Palestine you have a sense of spiritual nakedness until the friendly day's-eye greets you. This rising before dawn is unnatural: the thing is to wake to a world of nature awake to welcome you. It is presumption in you to hail the dawn: it is the puny mortal who should be hailed by the shining day. You have no right to rise before nine; you are due to give the day a chance to prepare for you.

It was reckoned expedient—if impious—to rise at four, breakfast by candle-light, and be off as soon as there was light to drive by. There is no suddenness of the dawn over the level stretches of this Maritime Plain. Very, very slowly the tented towns were revealed in the ground-mist, the long slopes of stubble became golden, the

walls of cactus rose up sentinel to the groves of eucalyptus and olive that slept on in their midst. The dust began to rise in detached clouds like smoke—provoked by the first early transport: there is no general dust before nine.

By five we were moving through the outer town into that dark soil country to the north that is rock sand parched grass. Wilhelma lay on the left—red roofs in vivid green. I was travelling with a sergeant who was genuinely interested in economics (and in more abstract subjects, too). He told me Wilhelma was a German communistic settlement, as Richon, near Sarona, still is for the Jews and Syrians. The prosperous aspect of well-built Wilhelma and the content that looks out at you from the faces at Richon both testify to the good that is in Communism.

Sergeant — is all against the degrading class-distinctions of England and the inadequacy of English primary education, and for making a home in Australia after the war. These utterances were *not* inspired by the Australian at his side; they came purely on his own initiative. “I want,” said he, “to go to Australia, where men are free. I do not want money, more than to live on unpretentiously. I want to live my life as a man out of reach of the shackles of England. In England a man hardly dare be anything he is not born to be. Initiative is dangerous. Inde-

pendence is not only discouraged but opposed. I have only to look at an Australian man—only watch his walk—to know that in his country he may be, not what he was destined to be by society, but what he has the will to be. I think John Masefield has summed it all when he said, of Australians on Gallipoli: ‘They died as they had lived—owning no master.’ ”

He had strong, finely-shaped hands, with a wonderful fineness in the texture of the skin of them. A gentle manner he had. Aggressiveness was far from him. All he asked was the rights of a man, with no one to impose on him. Certain it is that he would impose on no one. But he was not waterish.

He had been given little education. But he had educated himself; and he had escaped that priggishness that often assails the self-educated. He had a more intimate knowledge of the *Odyssey* in translation than most men with a classical education have of the poem in Greek. And he had an unpremeditated love of the fresh morning that made him good to ride with.

At midday we passed Tulkeram; but not the Tulkeram of the end of September. Then it was a Corps Headquarters. Now it was very far behind—hardly an advanced point at all. Between Tulkeram and our halting-place for the night, near Samaria, there was evident the heightened degree

of decay and denudation in the wake of the fighting. The skeletons were almost bare. Skulls grinned at you, where, in September, you had seen the hideous expression on features that had set in the contortions of fear and horror. The Bedouins had utterly stripped the deserted German and Turkish transport, which in September had stood intact, awaiting salvage: now it is doubtful whether they are worth salving. The Bedouins are super-Goths.

The Egyptian Labour Corps and the R.E.'s were pushing on with railway construction. In the paralysing heat of the mid-morning the Gyppos droned their working chant and lifted and carried with sun-stricken deliberation. Railway was wanted—frenziedly wanted; but in heat of this degree there can be no feverish pushing on of the construction. It cannot go any faster than this.

Supply dumps and field ambulances had been established at high frequency north of Tulkeram. A supply dump has no aspect of abiding in this country in such circumstances. By comparison, supply dumps in France are neat and permanent. Here they are amorphous piles of boxes. A tarpaulin is slung between adjacent heaps for shelter at nights. Transport crowds round the dump, the horses stamping the dust into clouds in impatience of the flies. The hornets swarm round the bacon and dried fruits. Horses get stung,

rearing and plunging in the dust. The detail-issuers spend the day in a swarm of hornets. Arms and bare knees are piteously spread with white lumps raised by the vicious sting. Military travellers in Palestine will always remember the summer hornets that cluster round any human company with food, and infest grass and thistle as you ride through it. On trek, horses plunge and bolt; at dumps they will stampede and tear into the wilderness—for hornets in Palestine always attack in force: swarms of them. The horse is not stung in one place only, but driven into panic by a score of maddening stabs.

A field ambulance is a kind of improvisation, after an advance that covers such distances as this. There are too many sick to go under the scanty canvas. The majority of them are Turkish prisoners. You will see them herded under tarpaulins beyond the marquees; and where no tarpaulins are available, they lie sick in the sun. Sandfly fever, relapsing fever, influenza and malaria (malignant and benign), dysentery, have hit the spent Turkish Army hard. So have they ours; but not to the same degree. The Turks are "dying like flies," as they say. The more acute cases are put in limbers, G.S. wagons, lorries, and pushed down. A cot full of comatose Turks, sick unto death, lumbering along in the dust, is a common sight. Even our own sick are evacuated

in any vehicle that passes the station. There are not motor ambulances for all, and there are no ambulance trains on this route. An orderly in the road stops all down-passing vehicles and demands if they can carry sick. Of wounded there are almost none. Medical officers are overworked. They are exhausted not only by labour but by the intolerable heat and the enervating air of the lower road-stations.

In France, where distances behind the line are short, roads good, and climate (except in winter) merciful, stability and comfort and permanency are possible in field ambulances and clearing stations. But when, in a country of this heat and barrenness, we drive the enemy from Sarona to Damascus in a week, disorganization and improvisation in the medical service are inevitable, and the hardships of the sick are unbelievable and unimaginable. Clearing stations are without the most elementary comforts. Transport to the base hospitals by orthodox vehicles is out of the question. The magnitude of the number of sick Turks could not be foreseen, any more than the prodigious size of the capture could have been foretold.

That night we parked at Museldieh, near Samaria, on a Turkish railhead. The station buildings were filthily dirty, choked by the litter left at decampment, and infested with fleas. We did not sleep in them, but on the clean stony

ground by the lorries. "Dewy eve" is a hackneyed phrase; but it covers the contrast between the reviving night and the dusty, burning day. To sleep under the stars in the light wind blowing off the hills was to know purity and complete repose.

We left at five next morning, climbing the range that opens to the Plain of Esdraelon, with Nazareth as an objective. The lower hills recalled Malvern. Up and up we mounted with the sun, through the olive groves that clothed the terraced mountain. On the crest of the range we came upon thick orchards traversed by the tiny rivers of water from the spring that filled the pitchers of the villagers. From the groves of fig and orange emerged to that spring the women and the lithe girls, pitcher-crowned, to fetch the day's supply. Dirty they were, but as fresh as the morning and clothed in a fine harmony of colour. They returned from the well in groups, chattering, with that clean, well-defined motion of the waist that denotes the full pitcher. At the well, as we passed it, were more arriving and more leaving. There was high-pitched wrangling about precedence and unmaidenly jostling and vicious emptying of opponents' pitchers—opponents who had cut in out of turn. Short and sharp hand-to-hand encounters followed on these acts of retribution. Those who were not fighting helped to raise the pitcher aboard



June 14 1917 July 19 17 1917

DAWN: CAMEL PATROL SETTING OUT

1917

their friends. Ragged boys came shouting after us with baskets of figs and pomegranates to sell ; but they were not tempting.

So we slid down to the Plain of Esdraelon—that battleground of Jewish history—through Jenin, cleaned up and rejuvenated, on past the lines of demolished Turkish transport to Afuleh, where the captured 'planes still stood on the aerodrome, the paint gone from them through long exposure. We looked up at Carmel on the left, and at Nazareth, white and terraced, ahead. Carmel looked cool above the burning plain ; Nazareth looked very high to climb to. So it proved. The road that could negotiate that Nazareth mountain must be tortuous. So we crept laboriously up it, the radiator boiling ; and at every sharp turn we saw Carmel from a new aspect ; and the Plain of Esdraelon, through height and distance, took on a beauty that was far from it an hour before. All the fine colour came to it as we began to look down on it as a whole.

At length we crept painfully into Nazareth. It had a Jerusalem aspect in the mass : the same white-and-red contrast of colour and the sprinkling of slender, deep-coloured, poplar-shaped cypress that always look in these parts as though etched on to the landscape. On the further fringe of the town we halted for lunch ; there we stayed until dawn next morning.

Nazareth is dirty and uninteresting, except by the moon. Then it is surpassingly lovely, strewn down the hill-side. The moonlight of Palestine is preternaturally bright; but when reflected from the terraces of white walls at Nazareth it lends an unearthly beauty to the little town. Far into the moon-bathed night the women come to the well with their pitchers. In the unnatural brightness you can see the sharp cut of their features and their shining eyes. You are spared the dirt of their garments; they are nothing but picturesque figures moving off with the sharply defined pitcher along the glistening road, gliding into the magic whiteness of the town.

By visiting the Military Governor we saw the magnificent apartments of the late German Headquarters; and by visiting the Colonel of the Guard we drank of the good German hock, relict of Liman von Sanders and Staff.

In a street in Nazareth I got into conversation with two English-speaking Syrians, who had been with the Turkish Army. One had been a medical officer; the other a lieutenant of infantry, wounded at Gaza. They had had their education at Jerusalem and at the American College at Beyrouth. I went to their home and met their mother, their sister Miriam, and the old man. He alone spoke no English.

German officers had been billeted in their

house. They had been consistently kind, but infernally lazy in their jobs. They were absolutely guiltless of the popular stigma of Hunnish aggressive ill-manners; but the impression they gave was that they had come for a soft job. They lived well in the midst of Turkish starvation. They posted to their wives in Germany parcels of butter and eggs ingeniously made up—posted them from a country where the Turks could not get these things at any price. They despised the Turks as a thoroughly inferior race.

Many a night of carousal had the younger brother been invited to at Jenin aerodrome. The cave of wine and champagne which we found at Jenin, he said, had furnished the material for many junketings. He had been at Jenin more than once when our pilots bombed the aerodrome. Then, he said, the Germans retired into the wine cave; which seemed a thoroughly sensible thing to do.

This Syrian family rejoiced unfeignedly in the British occupation of Nazareth. They asked earnestly whether the British intended to administer Palestine, and hoped above all it would not be delivered over to the Jews.

They brought forth sesame cake and honey and cognac and we feasted together. The old lady had the most gracious manner; the boys had a kind of English refinement, following rather

naturally, I suppose, on their eleven years of education in English. The old man sat silent and benignant. Miriam sat dumb in maidenly reserve.

They gave us flowers from the moonlit garden—handfuls of them: roses and jasmine. This was a gracious gift.

We climbed the crest of the hill over into Cana of Galilee next morning; which is a slovenly and filthy village—no place for weddings. But there is scope there for a miracle—a miracle of purification; only a miracle could make sweet that foul place. We passed the traditional well, filled with sordid, squabbling women; for you must understand that a Palestine town-well is a kind of paved rectangular courtyard, a few feet below the level of the road. The water flows through a wall at the end more remote from the highway.

Mount Tabor rose on the right as we passed down through Cana.

An hour's rumbling journey past the dozing goat-herds, whose black flocks rustled amongst the sparse corn, brought us to the edge of the mountain that looked down over Galilee. Soon we were overlooking languishing, cholera-stricken Tiberias. As we came warily down the risky hair-pin bends of the mountain road, we marvelled less and less that Tiberias should be in the grip of cholera. For as you looked down on it from the top of the mountain and breathed the keen

air about you and gazed upon the beauty of the Lake, the very notion of cholera was an intrusion ; but half-way down the mountain-side the air began to stifle, and the beauty of Gennesaret took on an atmosphere of treachery and its dead calm became noisome, so that you wished for a turbulent wind—even a Galilean storm—to break the oppressive stillness. Inhabitants met us on the lower slopes in caravans bearing their children and furniture. They were climbing up painfully out of reach of the plague. The denizens sat about the cobbled streets in dejection. What else could they do in such air ?—apart from any fear of cholera.

We waited not at all here, but pushed out of the black Tiberian ruins on to the road which hugs the Lake shore. We looked across at high striated clay ridges that again recalled the ridges of Gallipoli ; they looked a fitting deelvity for a race by Gadarene swine. As we worked round towards the entry of the Jordan there were long stretches of malarial marsh to traverse, shot with flowering oleander. Cattle were grazing on this vegetation. The herdsmen had built themselves tiny wigwams of rushes from which to watch the flock, and in which to doze at their task.

For lunch we halted on the shore of Tiberias above a monastery. The monks had some sick Australians quartered there. The sick thought they were at home : the monastery lay in the

midst of a grove of bananas, and the shore for half a mile beyond the little jetty was planted with eucalyptus. Freshly plucked bananas, fresh fish there is no call to multiply (here is the traditional site of the miraculous multiplication), oranges from the adjoining grove, would cure the maladies of most inmates. The monks pressed fruit upon us and wine, and sent us on our way climbing the mountains that command Galilee west of Jordan.

From these heights you see the pear-shape of Galilee gradually getting defined as you mount. Soon you look down on Jordan rushing tumultuously from the marshes between the high hills that imprison its fringe of ragged green. Near Jericho this fringe straggles into the Plain—merges into the lank reeds and brushwood of the Valley, panther - haunted. This is the “Swelling of Jordan.”

We crossed the bridge, repaired from its demolition by the Turks in retreat, and climbed the stony hills in the dusk. Hermon rose ahead in generous, airy contrast with the valley of vapours and darkness we were leaving. The slopes of high Hermon were still clothed in light; the Valley of the Jordan lay in ominous gloom—a gloom premature and unnatural through the depth of the gorge—a true symbol of the VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH. There was Hermon, and the uplands about it, bathed in the beauty

of the sunset ; already in the Valley of Jordan it was deep night. It is not hard to understand how the crossing of Jordan at evening would be symbolically ominous to the ancient Palestinians.

We were warned at all costs to camp well above the Valley. We did so, on ground hideously stony. In fact, the road from Jordan to Kuneitra was the worst we had known. It is boulders on the Damascus that you curse, as it is dust on the Jericho road. And yet that Jericho road is flinty beneath. It deceives you. You look for a soft, if asphyxiating, ride through dust. But you find that beneath the thick cloak of dust is a rocky surface that jolts you infernally. It is unfair. The Damascus road cannot be called really dusty—not after the journey from Jerusalem to Jericho. But it is of a roughness that cars and lorries were never built to withstand. If lorry-drivers in France could see what roads their brothers in Palestine have dared to cover, they would be outraged. It is unorthodox, after the roads of France. It is blasphemy, they would say, to force the sacred lorry to this.

Here, from a modern writer, is an estimate of the negotiability of the roads of Palestine. It is true he wrote before the Egyptian Labour Corps made its attack on the intractable ways of the Holy Land. But that valiant body did not effect so much by its labours as to render this estimate

untrue: "Roads for wheeled vehicles are now unknown in any part of Palestine, and in the earlier history they are very rarely mentioned as a general means of communication. There is, indeed, mention of the 'chariots' of Jehu and of Ahab along the Plain of Esdraelon; and there was apparently a royal chariot-road between the capitals of the two kingdoms. And under the Romans the same astonishing genius for road-making which carried the Via Flaminia through the Apennines, and has left traces of itself in the narrow pass of the Scironian rocks, may have increased the facilities of communication in Palestine. Hence, perhaps, the mention of the chariot-road through the pass from Jerusalem to Gaza, where the Ethiopian met Philip. Hence the steep descent from Gadara is paved with the remains of a regular Roman road, marked by the ruts of wheels, where wheels have now never penetrated for at least a thousand years. But in earlier times, and under ordinary circumstances, chariots must have always been more or less impracticable in the mountain regions. It was in the plains, accordingly, that the enemies of Israel were usually successful."

Well, these roads break cars and lorries at a terrible rate. The stranded *voyageur* by M.T. is fearfully common on these roads. Stranded for many hours he often is. Sometimes he stays

stranded until the First-Aid Lorry (that aptly-titled mobile-workshop) comes to help him out.

But the last twenty miles to Damascus is good. Damascus you do not see long before you come upon it. But the great green plain in which Damascus lies you do see from an immense distance. It comes on your sight like a Nile Delta. It is in as sharp contrast to its surroundings. The brown rocky country about it is like desert-sand beside the rich belt of green fed by the Abana and the Pharpar, rivers of Damascus. You skirt the stream of the Pharpar ten miles from the city. Damascus is hidden in the forest. You do not see its towers until you are upon it. But its sober suburbs you see climbing up the barren ridges of clay outside "that great city"—as it is called in the Scripture.

CHAPTER IV

DAMASCUS

THE first charm of Damascus as a whole city lies in the contrast which those brown sand-hills behind it make with the green strip of the Barada Valley. Journeying from Ludd through the monotony of lank brown growth that straggles to the horizon from the road, you give up hope of ever seeing foliage again until you pass El Kuneitra.

But indeed Palestine is not, at least to Western eyes, beautiful. This is certain, though there have been some fables spread about its beauty by Western travellers. But they were either speaking of Palestine in the spring or spreading themselves in the elation of literary composition. Dean Stanley is just in his estimate of the scenery of the Holy Land: "What has already been said of the physical configuration of the country must, to a great extent, have anticipated what can be said of its scenery. Yet the character of scenery depends so much on its form and colour, as well as its material, on its expression as well as its

features, that, unless something more is said, we shall have but a faint image of what was presented to the view of Patriarch or Prophet, King or Psalmist. Those who describe Palestine as beautiful must have either a very inaccurate notion of what constitutes beauty of scenery, or must have viewed the country through a highly coloured medium. There are, no doubt, several exceptions—Shechem, Samaria, Jericho, Engedi, the sources of the Jordan. But as a general rule, not only is it without the two main elements of beauty—variety of outline and variety of colour—but the features rarely so group together as to form any distinct or impressive combination. The tangled and featureless hills of the lowlands of Scotland and North Wales are perhaps the nearest likeness accessible to Englishmen of the general landscape of Palestine south of the Plain of Esdraelon.”

Palestine, I say, journeying from Ludd, in October is unlovely and monotonous in its scenery until you pass Kuncitra. Then you see the green of the Barada; and it is the richer for the hills behind it—browner, more desolate by far, than any landscape skirting Galilee or the Jordan. Far up the clay feet of those rocky hills straggles the brown-and-white suburb of Salhiyeh, all square-built and flat-topped, from the distance like bricks inserted in the clay soil. The line of

hills is cleft cleanly by the Duma Pass, the scene of that hideous slaughter by our machine guns. If you will climb into the fringe of Salhiyeh you will see the curious shape of Damascus—a jagged comet-form, all the angles and serrations of the brown tail defined with unnatural clearness by the depth of the green about it. In the amorphous head are a few minarets, like jewels. In Cairo there are too many minarets as you look from the Bey's Leap: they protrude like a porcupine's quills. In Damascus the city's flat brownness is just relieved by them. When we came to Damascus it was drought-stricken. Soon after it rained torrentially for a day. Then the sun shone and drew from the city such colour as we never dreamed was there. Nor had we dreamed that the trees were dusty, so green they seemed after the southern country. But, washed, they helped to throw up the wonderful colour of "that great city."

It is a relief to be delivered from the sight of the everlasting cactus-hedge of the southern towns. The cactus does flourish in Damascus; but so thick is the foliage that it is lost in the mass. You cannot look down on Nazareth without being obsessed by the ubiquitous pest. You can look down on Damascus and be unconscious of it. It straggles about the leafy roads in patches beside the mud walls. That you can bear, because it does not rise above the all-enclosing foliage.

The stinks of Damascus you will remember for ever. Cairo is clean by comparison: the alleys of Cairo are not foul. The stinks of Damascus are literally overpowering. There are offal, refuse, foul puddles in every street of the bazaars. The Abana is a foul river. "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" The answer is: Certainly not. The Abana is a kind of city sewer—disappearing at intervals in suspicious furtiveness beneath the streets and reappearing with no sweet savour. There is an ill-kemptness about the place that carries Oriental slackness a bit too far. In the streets that thread the heart of the city are ruts and holes that break the springs of M.T. every day. The tramline protrudes eight inches. This gives rise to deadlocks in traffic that hold up movement for an hour. Incredibly narrow and tortuous are the highways of the city. The only decent road is that which skirts the fountained promenade near the Hedjaz Station. I am sure the Damascans look on this bit of orderliness as a Western intrusion; just as I am sure that if they found themselves in an English town guileless of stinks they would call it insipid.

In the bazaars there is a baffling complexity—of colour, of race, of wares. The Mousky is less heterogeneous. In the Square, in the street which is called Strait, in the Gold Bazaar, Grain Bazaar,

Sweets Bazaar, Silk Bazaar, you have all the various colour of tarbushed Cairo, and more. Here the soldiers of the King of the Hedjaz throng ; there is endless variety in their clothes and their flowing head-dress. The Moslem women who veil their faces affect far more variety than the Mohammedan women of Cairo with their yashmaks. The French are here. The Australian hat and plume is everywhere. I never saw so great a number of Australian soldiers moving at random in any city. There is great jostling in these narrow streets, more than the normal jostling you get in any crowd. The Australian soldiers jostle passengers from their path because they claim they are due to give way to no people Oriental. This includes the Hedjaz soldiery. The Hedjaz, for their part, say the city is theirs. They will jostle in their turn. So there are collisions between these Allies. The Hedjaz are picturesque, but *swanky* is the popular adjective that describes them. The political gift of Damascus has elated them. Though the city is theirs by the right of gift, the Australians, who were chiefly responsible for its capture, resent the attitude of exclusive possession taken up by these Arabs. They glare at each other. Occasions are actually sought for jostling of a very deliberate kind. Each race has a dash of wildness (the Hedjaz more than a dash). There is rivalry between them in horseflesh and horsemanship. I

believe there is even rivalry between them for the favours of the houris of Damascus; and I am not sure that there the Australian does not win. Under the moon by the wall of the city you will see Australians in converse with dark-robed figures that have cast aside the veil. You will see no Hedjaz in this compromising attitude.

The veiled Moslem is new to the Australian—and tantalizing. He peers hard at the features behind; but he sees nothing, except when the sun is level; then he sees all—whether the houris know it or not. In unguarded moments the women lift their veils for a breather—no one in sight. As soon as a soldier looms on the horizon they “drop the lid” in haste and trepidation. It is a severe curb to the vanity of woman that she cannot show her features. It is a severe check to the inquisitiveness of man. All that the soldier sees normally is a neat ankle and a figure sinuous and voluptuous: this they cannot hide. I wonder if Moslem husbands know what inciting suggestiveness lies in the figures of their veiled wives, and that the veil only heightens it. The veil is the merest spur to free love. I believe it is designed to be a check.

The dusty bazaars are in semi-darkness. Their streets bear a roof of iron. They must get protection from rain. In Cairo all is open, for there it rains but rarely. Not only are the

bazaar streets in Cairo without roofs that would stop a shower, but the shops themselves, full of treasures. Here the rain comes in a deluge. From some of the street roofs the enemy took the iron for military use. What will be the state of these roofless streets when the rain comes is sad to think. They will be flooded all winter.

Except that there is greater diversity of peoples—both buyers and sellers—the bazaars of Damascus are much like those of the Mousky. There are the same well-defined areas for specific commodities, the same little cubicles for shops, where vendors squat and “reach for things.” There is the same voluble haggling, the same conversations carried on in tones that you would first mistake for quarrelsome. There are the same crying, peripatetic vendors of “limonade,” quoit-shaped cakes and toffee. The shoeblacks are here; but they are ahead of Cairo with their gongs to attract the uncleanly shod. There is a more incessant stream of laden donkeys through the bazaars here. In Cairo the donkeys are chiefly for pleasure riding; here they are mercantile, overladen with the striped sacks of grain and fabric. There are additions to the bazaars of Cairo in the Goldsmiths’ Bazaar, the Sweets Bazaar. The goldsmiths work with their blowpipes and tiny forges and tiny tools, moulding and fashioning. It is curious to see the workshop as part of the sale shop. The

belts, brooches, rings and trays exposed for sale in a showcase were made two yards away by that cunning Oriental fashioner squatting on his haunches. The Sweets Bazaar tempts you hideously. Eastern natted sweets and Turkish delight and toffees look as well as they taste. Mere assorted chocolates—such as you get at Groppi's—are crude by comparison. There are great serpentine coils of Turkish delight lurking in icing-sugar, nut toffee that is all nuts—none of your miserable paucity of nuts, such as one gets in English almond-rock : nuts form the matrix here. But enough of that : here, if ever, you are tempted to generate a liver the size of your hat.

Public baths abound in the heart of the bazaars. Fronting the street is the final open, divaned cooling-off-room, an amphitheatre of couches upholstered with a kind of gay-coloured towel. A fountain plays in the midst. The bathed sit swaying in the ecstacy of reaction from the steam, with closed eyes. No Roman ever bathed more voluptuously. No one minds your going in nor your penetrating to the bowels of the establishment. Room after room you pass, with swinging doors ; each is hotter than the last. In each there is a stronger smell of man. And in each you see drooping comatose forms. They give you strongly the impression that here they are seeking recovery from a debauch ; and for this impression there is

very good ground. The race is steeped in lasciviousness. In the last, and hottest, room the smell of man is overpowering; you hastily retrace your steps through the series of chambers and regain the comparative sweetness of the bazaars.

Foul as this city may be, there is beauty in every foot of it. That is the way to express it—in every foot. The beauty of Cairo rather lies in the view you get of “chunks” of it—the vista of a street, the space of a market-place, the mass of a mosque. Here the beauty lies in little pieces of wall looked at minutely—in a tiny piece of domestic architecture. It is a beauty in colour rather than in form. Form in Cairo counts for much, here for almost nothing. Here there is dilapidation in a degree undreamt of in Cairo. But dilapidation does not necessarily make for beauty, though some people think it does. I believe the beauty of colour in Damascus lies in extreme age—in the mellowing of age. After Cairo, the intense antiquity of the city—of every fragment of it—comes to you impressively. You feel the age of it as you pace every yard of its alleys. Cairo is comparatively modern and comparatively garish. There is a fine, if filthy, harmony in Damascus.

This is the end of October. The fruit is at its zenith. The grapes are only beginning; they are finished long ago in Jerusalem. Such grapes,

anyhow, you never tasted in Jerusalem. And you never saw such colour in grapes there—nor such size. It is a city of fruit. Every bazaar has its fruit stalls. They invade the Silk Bazaar, the Sweets Bazaar, the Boot Bazaar. Fruit is the only legitimate intrusion upon monopolized areas. Fine piles of grapes, pomegranates, figs, apples and pears there are; and everybody is eating fruit. When our first troops entered Damascus they were showered from balconies with perfumes, champagne, confetti. But all these were disregarded by the parched, matter-of-fact soldiers when the grapes were handed up to them. In the hotel you make half the meal off grapes.

There are two chief hotels—the Hôtel —— and the Hôtel ——. The former is inhabited by the “Heads.” It abounds in Staff Officers; the war news is handed round there. In the latter you get better meals, better service, but no atmosphere of distinction. In the ——, if you are lucky, your room looks down on the flowing Barada and upon the square. From the —— you look on the bazaars. The —— is famous for its voluble proprietor, an elderly gentleman who appears to spend most of his day in a kind of pyjamas and in loud-toned conversation with his patrons. His talk is chiefly rather-overdone descriptions of the habits of his late German patrons and flattering overwrought stories of the capture

of the city. He will break in on the official conference of two colonels with some florid anecdote about Liman von Sanders, and be told to go to hell. His wife and daughters live with him, and seemed, for some obscure reason, to keep under cover all day.

Anton is a familiar figure—is always being summoned in harsh, aggressive tones by his master for some trifling duty. Anton is *Chef de Bureau*, *Chef de Salle à manger*, *Chef-d’-everything*. He finds you a room, sees you get enough at table, makes out your bill, administers the porters and all the *garçons de chambre*—there are no *femmes*. The greasy herd of men who “do your rooms” wait at table—excepting at breakfast; when they are too busy. Consequently you wait long at breakfast for what little you get. There is a fine hall, with salons abutting for reading and writing. The walls are decorated with crude prints of the Sultan Saladin and his Bint, and equally crude illustrations of Biblical incidents—such as the just-averted sacrifice of Isaac—and with German mercantile advertisements.

There is a Bint at the front door who has a monopoly as bootblack. She takes the street mud off your boots. There is no bathroom; you get a tub in your room.

Intimate in the memory of most Light Horsemen will always be certain features of Damascus.

Our men will not forget the Hedjaz Headquarters in the heart of the city—the German Club—the Local Resources Office—the fine, commanding châteaux of Desert Corps Headquarters—the filthy Turkish Hospital—the English and French Hospitals in the suburb—the littered railway station by which the Hedjaz troops entered—the suburban roads, unspeakably rough and muddy—the afternoon perambulations of blatant under-dressed Bints in gharries—the guards on the Aerodrome, on the Ottoman Bank, on the captured grain stores, on the captured guns—the plentiful lack of ordnance and canteen stores—the corpses of dogs and horses in open spaces—the multitudinous beggars—the exorbitant prices asked for German razors that cost their vendors nothing—the moderate cost of silver and brass ware—the Hedjaz recruiting processions—the glut of matches—the potency of Arak—the cunning of the plausible English-speaking small boys—the puzzling complexity and fluctuation of the currency—the paucity of mails—the liberty and the usefulness of Turkish prisoners—the fitful and lawless discharge of fire-arms about the city all through the night—the suddenness with which sickness made its descent upon the apparently immune—the daily receipt and despatch, to time-table, of official mails by air—the dancing lights of Salhiyeh that burned till dawn.

If any of our men ever climbed to a point of vantage on those hills near Salhiyeh they are still less likely to forget what they saw. "Far and wide in front extends the level plain, its horizon bare, its line of surrounding hills bare, all bare far away on the road to Palmyra and Baghdad. In the midst of this plain lies at our feet the vast lake or island of deep verdure, walnut and apricots waving above, corn and grass below; and in the midst of this mass of foliage rises—striking out its white arms of streets hither and thither, and its white minarets above the trees which embosom them—the City of Damascus. On the right towers the snowy height of Hermon, overlooking the whole scene; close behind are the sterile limestone mountains: so that one stands literally between the living and the dead; and the ruined arches of the ancient chapel, which serve as a centre and framework to the prospect and retrospect, still preserve the magnificent story which, whether fact or fiction, is well worthy of this sublime view. Here, hard by the sacred heights of Salhiyeh, consecrated by the caverns and tombs of a thousand Mussulman saints, the Prophet is said to have stood whilst yet a camel-driver from Mecca, and, after gazing on the scene below, to have turned away without entering the city: 'Man,' he said, 'can have but one paradise, and my paradise is fixed above.' "

I carried from Cairo a letter of introduction to M. — at Damascus. In his home he received me very kindly. He is the *Ancien Directeur de la Banque Ottomane*. Notwithstanding the splendour of that high-sounding title, he lives a lonely old man in his spacious house. His sons and daughters are scattered over Europe and Egypt. A son is in France, one is in Serbia. They could not write to him during the war, lest he be suspect by the Turks and Germans who occupied Damascus. For four years he had lived in isolation there with his man-servant and his compulsory German lodgers. They had taken his piano for the German Club because it was a fine one. After the enemy evacuation he recovered it, tuneless and broken. They had felled the trees of his orchard for fuel. "Soon," he said, "they would have felled our doors to burn too." At nine-thirty he dined; and over his *apéritif* of Arak he would talk of his children and the currency and enemy depredations and his carpets and his bridge and the future of Syria. He loved to have a herd of English officers in between tea and dinner for bridge—of which game he was no half-master. For tea he spread a meal that sufficed you till next morning: there was no dinner for you that night—though he humbly deprecated what he called "the miserable repast." Saucers filled with all those exotic foods were there—those

cubes of baked meat and Oriental sweets and *hors-d'œuvre* that incite thirst and appetite and drive the guests alternately to fruit and wine on the one hand and more food on the other. He would leave his bridge in the inner room at intervals and exhort the non-players to help themselves (as though they were not doing that already) and to be happy and to smoke more, and to stay a long time and not to forget where his house lay (no danger!)—in short, to take possession of it (a thoroughly superfluous command). At eight o'clock, when a move was made to go, he would complain the afternoon was not yet half-gone (though dinner was long since served at the hotel) and implore another rubber. And he would get his rubber, for no one could have eaten any dinner at the —, even had they got there in time. And so this solid and protracted afternoon-tea would last till ten. But then M. — always sat down to his own dinner. But the guests might have observed that he had eaten nothing from his own tea-table; and he (shrewd, benevolent old man) knew well that his guests would not be hungry before morning.

CHAPTER V

LEAVES FROM A SYRIAN DIARY— DAMASCUS TO HOMS

31st October.

We left Damascus at seven in the morning by car. "We" includes the batman, the corporal, and Karl. One must not forget Karl. It is a salved Hun Mercédès car—salved at Jenin. I gave a receipt for Karl when I gave the receipt for the car. The car is a kind of young lorry—that is, it holds almost as much and makes as much noise. It makes more noise. It makes a noise like a tractor moving a heavy gun. It is solid-tyred. But in appearance it is like a super touring-car—quite a well-bred vehicle. It is only when it moves that it makes bystanders gape. It has no horn. It does not need one. Vehicles before it in the road always hear it coming. Its engine is terribly powerful—eight cylinders. It climbed the Lebanon range faster than any touring-car could have done it. On a road that is good and level it can do fifty miles an hour.

Karl is as proud of it as though he had given birth to it. He nurses it as tenderly. You must understand that it requires nursing. Its engine is faulty; and English fitters do not seem to understand it. Its cooling-pipes are faulty. It gets superheated after twenty-five miles; then the engine cuts out. Other things happen to the engine that I don't understand. But Karl always "fixes her up," as the saying is. He has a box full of "gadgets," which he pinched and otherwise collected over against this journey. He has never made us halt longer than to cool the engine.

Karl speaks pretty good English, which he learnt in school at Hamburg. There he also learnt engineering. He was apprenticed as a fitter. He is accustomed to be confronted by far more involved engineering problems than are offered by a Mercedes engine. A motor-car is a soft snap to him. He was enlisted as a motor-ambulance driver, and drove a car from Constantinople to Jerusalem. All the country we want to cover between Damascus and Aleppo he knows well. This is a great throw-in. We are travelling without a map. Karl can tell you how soon we shall reach Baalbek, and how long it will take this car to go from there to Beyrouth. He knows where we can pick up water. He can foretell the bad patches of road.

He is very happy in his job. He thinks he is lucky. So he is. The day before we left Damascus

he said: "I am very happy to-day." "Why, Karl?" "Because I this day my friend haf seen. I tink he is dead. But no—he is driving a car. I see him in Damascus. He has good job, like me." He is happy, too, because he thinks the war will be over by Christmas (a notion in which I concur with him). His work is congenial. In his cap and Australian tunic he is perfectly happy—so long as he can get tobacco for that pipe that is never from his lips, except to eat and sleep. I got him some captured German tobacco in Damascus. Karl's blue eyes lighted; for an hour after he could be seen walking in the orange grove near his car-stand ostentatiously puffing abnormal clouds of smoke from this chaff-like mixture. In the Damascus house in which we were billeted we found twenty-five boxes of German cigars. Some of these went to Karl. He conserved them lovingly. Only on very special occasions indeed would he take one into wear—such as on completion of a very heavy day.

He has blue, kind, and perfectly honest eyes—a rather elongated face (what Corporal —— calls a "good" face), with a cleft in the chin that will never allow him to be bested by any engine trouble. A pretty wit he has, an unconquerable taste for bully beef, and a command of Australian oaths that in his mouth are very diverting. When the car provokes him he raps out the

Great Australian Adjective like a born Bill-Jim. But his vocabulary of Australian oaths goes far beyond that all-embracing epithet.

He was happy to know we were going on the road again after three weeks' stagnation at Damascus. There the limit of his journeyings had been set by Desert Corps Headquarters, the Square and the Spanish Consulate. Karl seemed to want more difficulties to overcome than he could meet in this routine work. He made her rattle and roar through the Barada Gorge—that place of slaughter—that leads to Molacca. In the Damascan suburbs, beside the Abana, the chain broke and checked his career. He grinned.

The bare clay hills that rise behind Damascus give you a foretaste of the sort of country you may expect after passing through them. You keep the Abana, roaring and tumbling like a mountain torrent, for a few miles beyond the Duma Pass. Then you are upon the dreary country, such as you travel in the Judæan wilderness. But there is more and richer colour in its distance. It presages the ultra-richness of the Baalbek Plain beyond Lebanon, towards which you are journeying.

By an oasis of silver birches we halted for lunch and cooled the engine. — and — (batman) were helped in their labours of fire-making by the Bedouin urchins that came from the mud-village upon the hill-side. A half-naked

Bedouin child of four struggled up to —— with an armful of sticks. “Henna, Effendi—henna.” ——, elated at the dignity of his title, accepted them. He cannot abide Bedouins. He knows the right method with them on the road. But when a child addresses him respectfully as “Effendi” he forgets to be harsh. When we were seated, chewing our bully, and passing Bedouins halted, hoping for the best, they got the worst from ——. But to the little Bint who had brought him sticks he gave the residue in a tin at the end of the meal. She had hung about for it. No Bedouin—not even a child of four—does you any service except in the hope of baksheesh.

There is a continual procession of Bedouins on the roads in these parts, trekking with super-laden donkeys. There are always women with them—some carrying children and other chattels, some riding astride, exposing their bare thighs in the bestriding of the load. This—and far more than this—could never embarrass a Bedouin woman.

By three o'clock we were rattling through the passes of Anti-Lebanon—through the walls of rock. Here the Syrians were moving in covered caravans and hardly averting collision in the narrow defiles. Abruptly at the mouth of the pass came the view of the Plain of Baalbek, with the Lebanon rising beyond it. Very beautiful is that Plain—and very beautiful the lower slopes of Lebanon beyond.

Though they rise gently, they leave the Plain abruptly—so flat is it. A few tiny mounds rise in the heart of the Plain just as abruptly. The colour of vine splashes the rich red soil of the hill-side. The road up to Baalbek is strewn with wine-growing villages—white-walled, red-roofed, with pretty girls at the doors. It was just like Richon. All about the road lie the vines. They lie. They don't stand or climb. There is no training or supporting of vines here. They creep. In the heart of this wine country there is pitiable avarice. Here we pay a franc a pound for grapes. These girls are as obstinate as pretty in a sale. When you are passing through grape country like this you must have grapes. You can't go on without buying any. So they have you at their mercy; and they are relentless.

There are towns lying in the heart of the Plain. The Aleppan railway "tips them and runs," as it were. And there are some most beautiful little forests lying down there, and some streams. We ran along the very edge of the Lebanon slopes. The lower ravines of the mountains hide some hamlets, of which you see nothing until you are right abreast of them. But they are more than hamlets—so large and handsome are the villas tucked away there. You think of them as of the houses of rich vintners who have waxed fat on this chocolate soil. The streaks and patches of

volcanic colour are thrown right up into the bosom of Lebanon. It reminded me much of the fine Lemnian colour that met you as you looked towards Thermos.

It was dark before we got to Baalbek. You cannot conceive the beauty of that valley as the sunlight is leaving. A sort of solemnity clothes its richness then that makes you know how altogether fitting it was for the site of those temples whose ruins we are approaching.

We parked outside the lights of Baalbek next a field ambulance. I went there to ask about the town and stumbled across an invitation to dinner. The news of the Turkish Armistice, beginning this midday, had just come through. I think the dinner was a sort of thanksgiving meal. There was most excellent good soup, a roast pigeon each, some sweets and savoury, and flagon after flagon of cocoa—good for this nipping and eager air, for this is the opening of winter. The alternative to this had been bully beef and jam. At dinner there were all sorts of foolishly happy speculations about the imminent end of the war. It was the best news for many moons. That night I slept happy under the Syrian stars. The columns of the Temple of Jupiter rose against them on the right, and the silence of Lebanon towered on the left. And all upon the Plain was a peace that seemed far removed from war. Yet just

beyond the Temple of Jupiter was a Cavalry Divisional Headquarters; and beside me was a field ambulance crowded with men stricken with disease.

Friday, 1st November.

I was up betimes to see the ruins of Baalbek before taking the road. You approach them through an all-surrounding grove. They stand on an eminence. There is also an all-surrounding Arab wall which obscures them; a crude, purely utilitarian wall for defence when the Arabs made a fortress of the place. Once you are within the wall you know how noble these temples must have been from afar when you saw their columns unobscured by the defacing fortifications. Baedeker will tell you all about these ruins. But Baedeker cannot give you a notion of the nobility of the mind that conceived the building of temples on a scale of this magnitude. Here is granite from Assouan, the transport and rearing of which almost makes you cease to marvel at the indomitableness that reared the Pyramids. And these giant columns and cornices tower into the sky at a height and in proportions that bring you to an end of your speculation as to how it could have been done. Those that have been to Luxor and seen Baalbek say that Baalbek impresses them the more. And I believe it—without having been to Luxor. The

proportions of the ruins and the delicacy of the carving I shall never forget. In the Temple of Bacchus there is a new marble tablet in German and Turkish to commemorate the dual suzerainty over Syria. There is no excuse for the impertinent vandalism of this. English soldiers were busy dismantling it, under orders. It will be kept as a souvenir of Hunnish lack of any sense of propriety. No German demolition of any European cathedral is more vandal than the intrusive desecration of this blatant tablet, in new and garish colour, amongst the venerable ruins of Baalbek.

We retraced our tracks to Molacca in the early morning. This Plain, dew-sprinkled, was only less lovely than in the evening light. But there were dead and festering Turks by the track and miserable mules and horses stinking in the fields.

We halted to cool the engine and have early lunch before climbing Lebanon. McBey passed and was hailed, and haled back. He had just descended, and was making hot foot for Baalbek with a car full of kit and sketches and artist's gear. He had already had three breakfasts: tea was all he would take. Aleppo he was making for ultimately, before the winter rains caught him.

Our eight cylinders took us to the crest of Lebanon in forty minutes—at a pace that put to

shame all other transport. The bends of that fine road gave us the valley at a fresh angle every few minutes. We halted on the summit beside the rack-railway to cool again—justifiably enough. The R.E.'s were mending a bridge the Turks had gapped: in ten days the line to Beyrouth would be open. Lorries had panted painfully past us. French cars and ambulances from Beyrouth sailed down to Molacca with their engines off. Long lines of grape-laden donkeys laboured up from the Plain below, taking their wares to the Lebanon villages. From these we bought, and so cooled our own engines.

Karl, with his popular German theological mind, wanted to know where were the cedars of Lebanon that are bragged about in the Scriptures. Well, no one could tell him. Lebanon here has not only no forest, but no grass. It is like a huge rock, redeemed only by its colour.

With engine cooled we sped along the crest of the mountain until we got a hazy glimpse of the sea. Then we could ignore all engine; for it was incontinently shut off; and we entered on the easy twenty-mile glide down the sea-face of the mountain to Beyrouth.

On the crest of Lebanon, by the railway, are fine towns and fine hotels—in brown stone with green-shuttered windows. One would like a holiday there. They look towards the sea over those

magnificent peopled and timbered gorges that remind one so strongly of the skirts of the Alps as you come into the Plain of Lombardy. You are impressed by the contrast between the sea-side and the Baalbek-side of Lebanon. The bare, rocky austerity of the East is gone. The western slopes smile, forest-clad and orchard-clothed, upon the Levant. All the temperateness of the sea air is upon them. The people have changed: smiles and greetings come to you from all the doorways of the villagers; the little children laugh and salute you. From the denizens of Eastern Lebanon you get nothing but scowls—or at best a stolid, neutral stare. “In Greece and Italy and Spain it is the mountainous tract which is beset with banditti, the level country which is safe. In Palestine, on the contrary, the mountain tracts are comparatively secure, though infested by villages of hereditary ruffians here and there; but the plains, with hardly an exception, are more or less dangerous. Perhaps the most striking contrast is the passage from the Haurân and Plain of Damascus to the uplands of the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, with their quiet villages and fruit gardens, breathing an atmosphere almost of European comfort and security.” Beside, the genial French influence seems to have crept up these heights from Beyrouth sleeping by the sea.

Soon you are upon the suburbs of the city

which stretch enormous distances from it. Perched upon the slopes they recalled, in their colour and manner of architecture, the perching suburbs of Sydney harbour.

Upon the forests of pine that lie about the city you look as upon green fields. So regular in height are they, that they lead you to believe, until you are amongst them, that they are herbage.

My bones waxed sore through the constant application of the brakes in this long slide down to the coast. Nor was there lack of dust. At the hotel on the sea-front there was a bath and a kind of civilian dinner. Of these I took and was thankful. Nor did I turn to bed that night with further impression of Beyrouth than that it a good deal resembled a French port, and that there was an unconscionable number of chemists' shops in its streets.

Saturday, 2nd November.

I find my batman missing. He went out after tea last night and never returned. Probably no greater harm has fallen him than to be juggled. Probably he was found pass-less in the town after nine: this is a Corps Headquarters. The corporal doesn't worry unduly over him. He says he will end up all right. Certainly he is not the sort to fall among thieves and be imposed upon. A good fellow is the corporal—a grizzled, capable man

who "owned a ranch" (as the English insist upon putting it) before the war—and still does; his old foreman manages it. No excitement flusters him; no difficulties appal him or overcome him. He can be left to a job where tact and initiative are first essentials, and he will see it through with credit. He has long pow-wows with Karl about internal Germany. He is much interested in Karl's psychology. He respects Karl because the latter, when his malaria recurs, refuses to keep his bed for the day—insists on getting up and driving. He takes some German drugs he carries from his old ambulance. In them he has unlimited faith; and, either for psychological reasons or because there is real virtue in them, his shivering fits leave him. A less forceful character would lie and shiver all day.

But Karl's psychology is interesting to others besides the corporal. There are apparent contradictions in him. In general he is thoroughly modest—doing his job well and unobtrusively. But at Damascus he would always go out of his way and choose a damnably rough road with the sole motive of driving past his old friends at the German Hospital to swank it. It was a very blatant form of swank, but the only exhibition I ever knew him make. Except under the most explicit orders, he would never take the shorter, smoother road from our quarters to the city.

His sympathies are all anti-Prussian; but he is unconquerably loyal to the Fatherland.

In general he is a thoroughly kind and tender-hearted youth. But he would drive over dogs and at Bedouins in the most approved Hunnish fashion. With a dog lying in the track, an English driver would at least slow down—or make a show of doing so. Karl will do neither. I have seen him get up speed and drive clean over a dog where there was no excuse of necessity or expediency—and just look back and grin. More than one Bedouin he has nearly done for. No remonstrance cures him of this.

He is twenty-three years old: he looks not more than sixteen.

He has a wholesome fear of the French. The car had parked at the docks. The corporal had suggested to Karl he should take a walk about. “No,” he said. “No; the French would make me prisoner.” Probably they would. So he sticks to the car, and sleeps in it. So he is a useful guard of its contents.

Beyruth reminds me much of Havre or Boulogne, apart from the fact that it is full of the French who are administering it. It is built like a French port; its streets are French. Its women are French in feature and deportment. Some of them are very pretty.

The Americans are strong. The American

College is very old. There is an American Press where the Arabic Bible is produced. I visited the Press. The manager was there. He had lived long in Beyrouth. I asked what I could go to see in the place. As only an American could have replied, he answered: "Well, we have below the press that prints the Arabic Bible. And I will take you after to the American cemetery: I guess that's as historic as anything here." Never could an Englishman have made such a reply.

Some of the hotels bear the marks of sudden conversion from German *régime*. I stayed at the Metropole. But the plates and glasses and napkins were branded "Deutseher Hof." All the directions on walls were in German. The waiters and the maids could not cast off German accent and German mannerism in a single month. Half of what Veronica, my chambermaid, said was in German.

There are good shops in Beyrouth. Especially is there the good book-shop of S—— Brothers, where you can buy English novels and English *belles-lettres*. There the English subalterns congregate who cannot and will not shake off the associations of civilian reading. There are some English officers who cannot do their work in the field well unless they can have their traditional whisky-and-soda at meals: there are others who cannot keep efficient without their books. The necessity to

read in the field is a form of traditional-mindedness that dies hard with the English. They persist in giving to their old favourites the time they should be spending in the streets of the strange town, acquiring their experience of the great wide world. It is at one with their trick of spending whole half-days on the hotel verandah reading *Punch*—that stronghold of traditional and decorous humour. They are lost without their tea—without their traditional roast beef at meals. Only one brand of cigarettes can they smoke ; all others are “absolute filth,” as, with a nice sense of words, they express it.

To-night I stumbled across the Wazza. A free fight was in progress between a party of ladies and their gentlemen friends in a tavern. One lady was badly mauled. I saw her borne off a casualty. Those who were not acting as stretcher-bearers retired in their stockings and chemises to smoke and solicit on the balcony opposite.

Sunday, 3rd November.

Up at five to start early for Tripoli. Day dawns at six ; the electric light is off at this hour, so you grope into your clothes unshaven and feel the way downstairs to breakfast. An unwilling waiter is on duty, muttering in German—through force of habit. By the time he had got an egg and coffee it was light enough to eat by. At six the manager

appeared, half-asleep. He made out my bill in a fuddled fashion ; the result of which was that all the inaccuracies were in his favour. It was a trying task to convince him that I had arrived on the 1st as distinct from the 31st ; and that I had had one afternoon tea, as distinct from two ; and that I had not a batman living at the pub. But the argument was justified by the result — a reduction of eighty-seven piastres. Is anything more dispiriting than to leave a strange hotel at dawn, with breakfast a necessity ?

The car didn't arrive till seven-thirty. I might have lain an hour and a half longer, had I but known. The car's fan-belt had broken, I found on Karl's arrival ; and he had been sore put to it to improvise a repair. I sat an hour in the window that looked down on a side street running back from the sea. It was a Sunday morning. There were people going to Mass. There were beggars beginning their day ; they begin early in Beyruth and work hard all day—and far into the night. They accost you returning late to the hotel ; they stop people at daybreak. There never was such destitution as in Beyruth at the end of the Turkish domination. There was nothing like it in Damascus. Perfectly naked children were begging at shop doors—emaciation expressed in every fleshless limb. Youngish adults were lying in the streets, their eyes glazing through no other cause than the want

of food. The wail of starvation pursued you down the alleys of the city. Most soldiers get impervious to the cries of Oriental beggars ; but I have seen them give money here to wretches they knew were not simulating misery. I saw scraps of refuse fought for as food in Beyruth with the tenacity of extreme hunger. There is not much bluff in Beyruth begging. I could see it from this window this Sunday morning.

In the doorways of the shops opposite there were women already seated smoking. Never, except in Beyruth, have I seen women smoking hubble-bubble pipes—and certainly never, except here, before breakfast. There was the temptation to explain it as the allaying of the pangs of hunger ; but the women who can sport a hubble-bubble pipe and a shop are not so destitute as to be subject to extreme hunger. It is mere degeneracy, I think.

At last the car came roaring down the cobbled streets and panted before the hotel. We set out, less S——, the batman, who, I discovered from the corporal, had got into drunken altercation with the police on the evening of the 1st. and was now “ in the boob.”

The Tripoli road lay beside the beach all day. It was strewn thick with villages built in brown sandstone. For the first twenty miles the flanks of the Lebanon stood above us ; and all that

way the benign colossal figure of Notre Dame de Liban glistened white upon the highest peak of the mountains above the monastery. It was a beautiful sight that will endure long in memory—that crystal-white embodiment of the guardian spirit of the dwellers in Lebanon towering above her domain, gazing perennially upon the sea that laves its shores.

Soon after leaving Beyrouth we crossed the Dog River—infested in mythology by that fabled dog whose bark at the approach of strangers could be heard as far as Cyprus. We heard nothing of him. On the wall of rock which skirts the river-bank are the inscriptions of the four Empires of Egypt, Assyria, Greece, and Rome. There are the figures of the earliest and greatest oppressors of Israel. Beside those very inscriptions we were forced to halt to cool the engine. “There is no other country in the world which could exhibit the same confluence of associations as that which is awakened by the rocks which overhang the crystal stream of the Dog River, where it rushes through the ravines of Lebanon into the Mediterranean Sea; where, side by side, are to be seen the hieroglyphics of the great Rameses, the cuneiform characters of Sennacherib and the Latin inscriptions of the Emperor Antoninus.” And above these ancient characters the traveller this day sees carved into the limestone rock those

words which celebrate the latest feat of a conquering army in these parts—the deliverance of Palestine and Syria from the Turkish domination. Now you may read these simple words over the legend of Sennacherib :

THE BRITISH DESERT MOUNTED CORPS
AIDED BY
THE ARAB FORCES OF KING HUSSEIN
CAPTURED
DAMASCUS, HOMS AND ALEPPO
OCTOBER, 1918.

It is an impressive linking-up with the ancient battle-history of the land.

Upon the narrow sea-road we were sore put to it to pass a whole Division of infantry, with transport and artillery, marching north. Karl showed his mettle in this. *Magnificent* is the only word that covers his initiative, versatility and ingenuity in negotiating that road, difficult enough without the impediment of a moving Division. He took risks with embankments, with bridges, with sandy patches that a driver less good would either have blenched at or taken with disastrous results. It was the valour of intimate knowledge of his art and of supreme confidence in his own powers that brought us without mishap past the head of the interminable column to a luncheon ground, which was also a cooling ground for the boiling engine.

We had a meal on a cliff above the sea—sur-

rounded with a horde of hungry waiting Syrian imps. They would not be driven off. Wherever you stop on the road in Syria to eat you will have a silent crowd of youngsters to watch you at it. They congregate mysteriously when there is no village in sight. They talk little—just sit and watch you, hungry-eyed, performing any service you ask in the hope of a reward in food; and many that you do not ask. They bring wood to start your fire, keep it replenished, take the soiled utensils and cleanse them, help you pack up—and are well content with the remnant of a tin of bully, a crust of black bread, a fragment of Army-biscuit. It is not money they want; but food—"mungaree," as they say. They are genuinely hungry.

After lunch there was climbing of the mountains that run sheer into the sea south of Tripoli. The road climbs valiantly for seven miles, then baulks at the crest of the range and ends by going round its face sheer over the water—a kind of bracket-track three miles long hewn into the perpendicular cliff.

Upon the other side we slid inland down into the plain and cooled the engine. Such had been the daring nature of the road creeping round the rock at that dizzy height above the water that the engine must have got superheated with trepidation. She took longer than usual to cool, so

that it was growing dusk when we began the last range before Tripoli. Darkness caught us in the heart of those mountains. We had no lights; we knew from the map and from the climb we had just completed that the risk of descending to the sea by starlight was not to be taken. There was nothing for it but to halt, back on to a side-track and "get down to it." Mosquitoes sang about us. They did more than sing. They stung unreservedly. The jackals howled down the gorges. Karl lay in his blankets reading by candle, far into the night, a text-book on mathematics—which was all he had saved from his little stock of books at Jenin, where he was *gefangen*. Fortified with this dull volume, filled with the stuff he loves, he defied mosquitoes whilst the rest of us buried our heads in our blankets for protection. An extraordinary fellow is Karl—endlessly interesting.

We were wakened thrice in the night—and nearly "done for"—by parties of Syrians trekking with donkeys. They travel much by night, these people, transporting their grain and olives, and sleeping by day. In the uncertain light of the stars they came near to travelling clean over us.

4th November.

We left at five-thirty. At seven we arrived at the village of —, not yet in sight of Tripoli, and stopped for breakfast. The denizens crowded

round ; they always do. They perform gratuitous services, which distract rather than help, in the hope of baksheesh. One old and lean and tattered fellow put out the fire in his zeal. As we took breakfast beneath the olive-trees another, in rags, came and held converse. He claimed to have lived in Sydney. I believed him. He spoke Australian very well. He appeared to have an interest in an adjacent olive-oil factory, and tried to arrange with us a sale of military petrol for his engine. He looked like a Miller's Point rough. I judge he left Australia in a hurry—as a fugitive from the police. He tried to ingratiate himself by swearing generously. He didn't succeed. I expected him to ask for money at any moment. But he hardly got encouragement enough for that. At the end of the meal a gross fellow in a Panama hat, with a brief-bag, came asking a lift to Tripoli. He was mayor of the village. He was a member of a firm of Syrian merchants in Northern Queensland. His intimate knowledge of the towns of tropical Queensland proved his veracity. We took him up. He said it had cost him three thousand pounds to save his b—— skin from the Turk. If he had had to pay for the safety of his person by the stone, it couldn't have cost him less. Him we dropped at the Khedivial Hôtel. He wanted to pay ; and when that was declined, he wanted to buy Arak—the Syrian absinthe—for us ; which

also was declined, as too crude and potent a spirit. So he left us his profuse and exaggerated thanks only ; which sufficed us.

Tripoli sprawls on the bay. It reminds me alternately of Alexandria and Heliopolis. It has the colour of Alexandria on the sea-front, and the Moorish architecture of Heliopolis in general. I suspect it is modelled on the Moorish Tripoli of Northern Africa. Shipping is busy—traffic with Beyrouth and Port Said and Alexandretta. Poverty and starvation are as distressing as at Beyrouth.

The Syrians are a fine race. We had tea with M. —, a Syrian banker. He had wonderful idiomatic English and a fine broad outlook that embraced a close knowledge of Australian life and of English politics. He is no doubt exceptional. But the pure Syrian fellaheen we had seen all along the route. The men are well favoured, with a manly, self-controlled aspect. The girls are beautiful, with the alert, changeful beauty of young deer ; there is nothing stolid in them.

Karl was much embarrassed at Tripoli. The children recognized his vehicle as a Mercédès and himself as a German. They ridiculed both—pointing and yelling as we passed.

In the afternoon we bathed, and in the evening slept on the beach—much refreshed.

5th November.

We had to get rations and petrol in the morning before leaving Tripoli. This delayed us. We didn't leave till eight; which was a late start. What couldn't an army do if it hadn't to eat! What mobility there would be! What time would be saved! Half the day is spent in preparing to eat and in eating; half the anxiety of Army commanders is expended in problems of feeding. But the ration, I swear, is good: bully beef, jam, most excellent brown bread (if you are lucky; if you are not, most execrable biscuit baked in Egypt), cheese that Londoners would sell their souls for, potatoes, bacon for frying, and a raw onion "to" your bully. What more can one ask?

Ration for the car consists in twenty gallons of petrol that Londoners would give the eyes out of their heads for—for joy riding. It must "nark" them to think we can get it by simple signing of a chit. But no—that is not accurate. You sign a chit in the supply office; the clerk gives you an order on the "detail" store; the detail-issuer gives you "a chit on the dump"; and with that you begin your search for the petrol-stack. But Londoners would go to far more trouble than this, with gladness.

So Karl poured it in—all twenty gallons she holds—and we set forth through the sandy streets

of Tripoli. That sandstone clock-tower built in the Square you will always remember for its curious detachment from all public buildings and for its extraordinary height. In the northern suburbs of Tripoli are the finest houses—and the newest—the most like the mansions of Heliopolis in colour and Moorish aspect.

For miles and miles there were Indian troops metalling and draining roads for the winter—a bootless task, we hope, so far as we are concerned. There is good reason to expect, with our present war news, that we shall not be in Syria even as garrison this winter.

We lunched beside a stream tearing down from the high ground and driving a stone mill. The Bedouins were bringing their grain on donkeys from all parts of the plain. They had to wait a long time for the grinding; but they persisted in waiting—seemed glad to wait for the excuse waiting gave for idleness and conversation; beside, if they hadn't waited their friends would probably have pinched their store; and if they hadn't watched the miller he would probably have pinched a moiety. The Bedouin of Mahomet's time may have been a worthy fellow: I wouldn't trust the modern Bedouin with a sack of *my* corn for grinding. Rich landholders came in riding astride under their flash-coloured umbrellas. The incongruity to an Australian of an umbrella worn on

a mount is extreme; so is the disproportion of a donkey's load in this land.

This stream and mill were an oasis in a rocky wilderness. The road was boulder-strewn. It twisted the steering-wheel from Karl's grasp momentarily till his arms were nigh broken and his eyes bloodshot. He emitted terrible Australian language. The car clears low—far too low for such a road. Both our hand-brakes were broken on the rocks; lumps of stone, caught up, threw off the chain by which we were driven as we climbed the hill; then no foot-brakes held her, and we began to run back. We were nearly into the abyss that time.

It was a thirsty land, as well as a rocky. The radiator was empty (it leaked anyhow) long before we came to a camp in the middle afternoon. But there was no water there; they had transported theirs. We got all the dirty washing water the camp held out of canvas buckets, and slaked her a little.

Soon after that we met the bivouac parties of the Australian Mounted Division. The Division was on the move—that is, two Brigades of it—to Tripoli. Now it was dark. We pulled into the roadside. The column was to arrive at ten. We had a meal with the advance party by the unnatural glare of an acetylene lamp. A high and biting wind was blowing amongst the boulders. It was

a frugal and a frozen meal. Then we cleared a space of stones for a valise to lie, and snuggled down. It was too cold for heads above blankets. The Brigades rattled in at ten-thirty, and waked us! A terrible cursing there was as they got transport into the roadside fields. There were collisions inevitable, and overturning amongst the rocks. I think all people did not get rockless space in which to sleep: there were sore hips in the morning. But they had hardly time to get sore: they didn't turn in till one (many of them), and were up again at four to move on.

There were no Guy Fawkes illuminations to-night. But it was Cup-night—and there was much disjointed speculation about the running.

6th November.

We didn't get water until we reached the Orontes this morning. That was at six. We left camp at five—after a silent breakfast: we nibbled amongst the rocks like conies.

But we were a little cheered by the sight of Homs, as we sped down to her in the dawn and the fresh mountain wind. As the dawn grew we were exhilarated. The farther you get from broken sleep and frugal early meal the more heart you get—up to a point. In an hour you shake off drowsiness; that past, the little, though sufficient, food you have taken in the keen morning sharpens

the perceptions. The swift motion and the broadening day make you keenly alive to all the detail of the landscape. The broad sheet of Homs Lake lay silver on the right; amongst the low timber of the Orontes Valley the river flashed; the early dust of Homs rose like a thin mist about the Mosque and the Citadel—just as the dawn dust of Damascus used to come up.

As we got to the river its beauty increased. The green of the stunted timber was more vivid. The broad, turbulent stream glistened among its rocks. The orchards it watered were rich in figs and apples and pomegranates—and all traversed generously by canals from the Orontes. The orchard leaves by the roadside were dusted by the motor-lorries that lumbered past, even now, in long procession, bearing the food for Homs and Aleppo from Tripoli. Time was when lorries took food to our most advanced troops from Ludd. About six weeks ago they did that. Now it would take lorries six days from Ludd to our brigades. The journey from Tripoli takes them twelve hours. Daily they come up—along a road for which they never were built. The casualties among lorries are very heavy. The Corps Commander told me the only reason why the Australian Mounted Division moved back to the coast was that the lorry service for their supplies could not be maintained.

We were in the town by seven-thirty. I had a wash and a shave in the A.A.G.'s room. Desert Corps Headquarters is inhabiting an old Turkish barracks—clay-roofed stables round a broad courtyard; bare stone rooms for the officers. These “A” and “Q” branch are now turning into combined offices and sleeping-apartments. A soldier of the Cherifian Army was on guard. The Hedjaz Army is all over the town—galloping through the streets, shouting aimlessly and behaving generally like brigands. They are curious Allies.

The afternoon I spent visiting the regiments lying beyond the town, which that night were moving towards Tripoli. They were in the throes of preparation. A cavalry regiment begins to prepare early for moving. A Brigade begins still earlier. It was the Third Brigade that was to move—at six that night. This was three o'clock. All the horses had full pack up. All horse lines were down. The Walers were held by riders—every one of them. The horses were feeding. The men were preparing to feed. All regimental cookhouses were *mafish*—every man his own caterer. Groups of four and six were boiling the billy on their own meagre fires. The men chewed bully and biscuit as they stood great-coated in the dusty wind. A half-gale was raising clouds of dust that made all gritty; and very cold it was

already. All bivouacs and tentage were down and stowed. The Orderly-room was a table in the blast—left for the transport wagon until the last minute. An Orderly-room there must be until actual movement began. There the Adjutant was scrawling in indelible pencil amongst his flapping papers held by lumps of stone. The officers were taking a snack standing on the site of their old mess. Bill, the mess waiter, had contrived to serve up half a dixie of tea. He was handing it round. The officers took the dust from the surface with little finger before drinking. Those who had finished their bread and jam were smoking fags. The others were being very polite to Bill, whose job was trying. But Australian officers always are polite to the mess waiter. English officers are not, in general. Many of their mess waiters they treat like the lowest flunkys. For this there is no excuse. The proper attitude towards a mess waiter is one of perennial apology for the obligation he puts you under by being servant to you. English officers roar if the food is not well and punctually served. They rarely say "please" or "thank you" to the man who brings it. If Bill asks the Colonel if he will have more meat, the Colonel says: "Yes, please, Bill—if you don't mind." All his officers follow suit. The result is, Bill will do anything for them at any time, with gladness.

All is unrest—all is litter—in the preparation to move a cavalry camp. It is the true type of the mutability of military life. The *Bulletin*, *The Argus*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, empty tins, litter the whole site in the early stages; later they will be heaped and burnt. The ground is marked with holes and mounds, where have been tents, bivvies, little trenched dining places that the men make—sitting feet-in-trench and heaping up the earth therefrom as table in the centre. In this moving cavalry life a man has no privacy, no quiet, no cleanliness, no cosiness, no property but bare equipment. He can carry nothing else; every half-pound on the horse counts. It is a life in which every man depends greatly on human companionship—and that not of his own choosing. So there is toleration of humbug and hypocrisies and littleness. It is a life of essentials and reality. A man is continuously face to face with reality in his fellow-creatures and in himself and in the earth about him. It is a time of moving that brings this home to you most clearly; because then there is less fixity, less permanency, less stability in a camp than ever.

That night I slept in the Turkish barracks in Homs. From bugs and mosquitoes there was no respite. About two I got up and dressed and perambulated; and was relieved—if not happy—to see the dawn.

CHAPTER VI

LEAVES FROM A SYRIAN DIARY—HOMS TO ALEPPO

7th November.

To-day I saw something of the town. Its mud walls and its buildings are dilapidated. Its bazaars remind me of those of Damascus. Less rich they are, and less varied. But the arrangement is the same, and there is the same overhead protection against the torrential rains of this land. I bargained with a boy at a street stand for walnut toffee, and agreed to the dimensions he mapped out with his knife for five piastres. This took a long time—as all Oriental bargaining does; and the crowd collected to look on and offer suggestions—as is always the case in the East. People in bazaars who apparently do not “belong”—who come up casually—offer gratuitous suggestions and emendations in a bargaining bout in a most generous fashion. Often they take a more active part than the vendor himself; and—curious thing!—he never seems to resent their interference. Well, the

crowd collected, and ultimately I got my slab of toffee cut into chunks (they always want you to take sweets bare in your fingers through the bazaars) that could be covered by small sheets of paper, and set off. A hundred yards away I was plucked at the sleeve by a little girl of twelve whom I had noticed at the sweets stand, but who had taken no part in the altercation there. She spoke no English or French; but pointing back at the stall she said: "Ten piastres!—ten piastres!—ten piastres!" very emphatically, and insisted on my returning. There, through an Arab boy who spoke French, she claimed that I had given a ten-piastre piece and received no change. As a fact, I had forgotten the change—and I now remembered having tendered ten piastres. To my surprise the young salesman admitted it and forked out without demurring. This I thought very graceful service on the part of the young Bint, especially as she declined to take the five piastres change as reward—or any part of my toffee. A fine sense of fairness she showed—and a fine unwonted freedom from secondary motives in her delicate refusal of reward.

The Orontes flows through the town—as the Robec flows in Rouen—between the street and the dwelling. But it's a finer stream than the Robec and less concealed. Stone steps descend into its current from the house gardens, and it is

spanned by tiny bridges that give a sense of private possession of the stream. Canals direct the Orontes into little rivers of water that slake the public gardens and the avenues of trees that line the roads. Australians will always remember how the girls and women of Homs spend whole days sitting in converse beneath the trees by the rivers of water. They will also remember how beautiful some of those women are, and how much lighter in complexion they are than any other Syrian women we have yet known. They will also remember that they are emancipated from the primeval habit of veiling their faces as you pass. They do veil their faces, but they are not "particular" about it; they do not seem to think themselves defiled if you have seen them.

It was by the canal about the Corps Commander's house that the women most did congregate—because there was the pleasantest shade, I think. But also they like watching the ingress and egress of the red-tabbed, and all the ceremonial that gets enacted at the entrance to such a headquarters.

In the afternoon we left for Fifth Brigade Headquarters. Through the bazaars we came—out past the Mosque, along the wide and dusty road that gives exit from the town through the wilderness of tombs.

8th November.

Last night was cold, with a biting wind that had begun in the middle of the afternoon and which continued past the dawn. It was hard to keep the blankets about your head, so strong was the half-gale; and it was impossible to be warm enough beneath them to sleep for an hour continuously.

This morning Karl was ill—with fever, internal pains, bad head and violent shiverings. He wanted to drive to Hama. But I took him to the field ambulance, where he was admitted without hesitation. The M.O. said that if he tried to drive he would break down. Very sadly Karl entered the hospital. In hospital he thinks he sees the entrance to the cage and indefinite captivity and unsympathetic supervision. That does not interest him. The M.O. says he will not evacuate him. This reassurance was like a medicine to Karl. He assured the M.O. that, if he would only give him aspirin and a night's warmth, he would be all right next day. The M.O. disagreed, and said he certainly would not drive with impunity before three or four days—perhaps a week. He was sent into Homs that night with a guarantee that he would not be moved further.

Karl is our only hope for moving, I fear. Only he could drive that car. None but a German could make much of a sick Mercédès.



from Sydney
Nov. 10. 1888

THE AUSTRALIAN DIVISION AT HOMES

The afternoon was spent with the regiments. They are growing stale in this place after the movement of the late battle—especially since the other Brigades have left for Tripoli. By the sea there is the town and movement and the variety of scene which the Levantine coast gives. Here is only the red earth about them and the distant knolls clothed in yellow grass, and the Lebanons in the west blackening daily with storms and the two bright minarets of the Mosque of Homs above the depressed roofs of the town. There is “watering” twice a day, and “mucking out” and “feeding up”: these usually distasteful tasks are welcomed here as breaks in the monotony of living. The Turks are at peace, and we wait anxiously for news that Germany has cried off. There is little military objective in life here now. Men are chafing to get home.

9th November.

One wakes early these days—at five or five-thirty—because one goes to bed so early. It is dark at four-forty-five. Dinner is over by six. Often you are in bed by seven. There you smoke and read, with the scream of hyenas in the wilderness over the railway line and the report of revolvers of the men who go fox-shooting under the early moon. But you are asleep by ten. Mahmoud wakes you sometimes by drawing the

bivvy sheet. But more often you are awake first. Mahmoud is one of the Gyppos attached to the unit—as they are attached to all horse transport units to assist with the nags. They get six piastres a day and think themselves lucky. To this small unit are attached Mahmoud and Mohamed. Mahmoud is batman to the officer, Mohamed is a general rouse-about. Mahmoud is a faithful soul with a “good” face and a wife and two children up the Nile. He is a fellaheen. He is a super-batman, more attentive to his boss than any Australian would ever be, and more so than any Englishman—which is saying much; for the English batman (God preserve him! and his soul!—if he has any left!) is often the incarnation of slavish and meticulous attention. But no English batman could excel Mahmoud in his trick of placing the shaving water and opening the razor and setting the glass and preparing the bath in the petrol tin. At meals there is no great variety; but Mahmoud anticipates you with the fried bacon and the jam and cheese at breakfast, and in the replenishing of your mug. He is sensitive to the most muffled call from the bivvy, and responds with his “Awah, Effendi”—most deeply respectful. Mahmoud has a sense of humour almost incompatible with such slavishness. He is a true Gyppo in the sense that you can always get a smile out of him. But it is a restrained smile

—he is different from his fellows in that—more like the dignified smile of an English butler. Mahmoud potters round you apologetically as you emerge from the bivvy, stretching yourself in your pyjamas and gazing over the military villages of low, severely-triangular bivvies that lie in rows round the hollow squares of horses of the regiments. He potters round you as you shave : you almost expect him to offer to wipe the razor on the shaving-paper he has placed under a stone. He hangs about you whilst you stand on a sack naked to the rising sun and fling water on your person ; and you fear he is going to offer to rub you down. But now he busies himself with setting the breakfast on the petrol cases, and leaves you to clean your own teeth !

Mohamed is another creature—no English-butler civility about him. He is “rough as bags”—as they say—due, no doubt, partly to his life amongst the horse-lines and the Bill-Jims who preside there and rag him and kick his hind person—sometimes in jest, sometimes in earnest ; but due, chiefly, to his temperament. He does not smile restrainedly : he guffaws unreservedly. Inured to cuffs, he loves to be charged with the clearing of the ground of loitering Bedouins. These he kicks and thumps in the most generous manner. He is brave as a lion with military authority behind him. He makes big louts

howl with pain, and grins at their discomfiture. Mohamed alone, I know, would not dare to hit any one his size. He is a terrible brave fellow in the lines here.

After breakfast I went into Homs to see Karl. He had relapsed. The M.O. said he thought he would not face the road for several days. Even Karl, game and tough as you make 'em, was inclined to agree. The war news had come through. The M.O. congratulated him, on the abdication of the Kaiser and of the Crown Prince, as a member of "a free nation—" as he somewhat inaccurately expressed it. Karl did not seem greatly cheered. He had expressed himself in the past as loyal to the Emperor. He went back to his blankets shivering—poor devil! It certainly is malignant malaria, as distinct from malaria benign. This latter is a curious name—almost a contradiction in terms; but it is the regular medical appellation. "By comparison" is the implication. You see women washing at the banks of the Orontes with benign malaria. It does not incapacitate them. They will bat their clothes with great vigour, and suddenly knock off and "have a rigor" (as the doctors say), shivering violently over the unfinished task. In a few minutes they will recommence.

I see nothing for it but to wait till Karl is better; anyhow, there is nothing for it at present. I have

tried in vain for another driver—for a car in exchange; both drivers and cars are “as good as gold” here. Anyhow, I confess I don’t blame any Corps Headquarters for declining to swap a perfectly good car for this Mercédès. . . .

The news is through that the German Envoys have left Berlin for the Western Front.

10th November.

This morning a party of the Cherifian troops passed along the Aleppo road. They are very flash, with good horses; but when you’ve said that you’ve said all. They love display; and I question their courage. They love to gallop aimlessly up and down the column, discharging their rifles indiscriminately into the air—a noxious habit! They have not grown up. As long as they have ammunition they seem bound to shoot it off into the heavens. As long as they can tear about with robes and turbans streaming in the wind, and hear the noise of discharge, they think they are fulfilling their destiny. Our troops cannot away with them. They always jostle each other in the bazaars. Bill-Jims, I fear, go out of their way to bump the Hedjaz in public places. The Hedjaz flashy pride resents this. That they should sometimes come to blows is not a wonderful thing. And they do come to blows. The Australian detests them because he detests flashness and

because he feels the Hedjaz are claiming victories in Syria for which they have not done the fighting. It would never do for Australians and Hedjaz to garrison in the same town—never. The same country is hardly large enough to hold them.

Going in to see Karl this morning, I found the Orontes had flooded the town. There had been heavy rains in the upper reaches, and she had burst her banks in the town and flooded all the streets of its low, flat area. Lorries and wagons were splashing through a field of water. The hospital ground-floor was flooded. Karl's malaria was not improved by the fact that his blankets had been wetted. The M.O's in their tents in the hospital grounds had been overtaken in their sleep; their valises on the ground had been immersed. The flood had come on them without warning.

This night the camp was full of suppressed excitement in expectation of to-morrow's war news. For, according to the Allied ultimatum, a definite answer from Germany must be had by eleven to-morrow morning as to whether she will sign the Armistice terms. It was felt that by to-morrow midday the war might virtually be over.

11th November.

There was a pen of live sheep bleating outside the bivvy this morning—brought in overnight for

fresh-meat ration. The local Supply Officer is requisitioning fresh meat and vegetables. The Army is to a great extent "living on the country." A sheep costs between four pounds ten shillings and five pounds—a terrific price. But the Supply Officer told me the local denizens are unwilling to sell. He believes the reason is they regard us with their experience of the Turk fresh in memory—the Turk who requisitioned and never paid. They hide their sheep from him and drive them into the wilderness when he appears to requisition. I saw some Bill-Jims making short work of those bought for the day's food.

I got a Signals Officer from Brigade with a mechanical turn to drive the *Mercédès* into Homs, so that if Karl were better he could step right into her. But Karl was worse; and the Signals Officer very nearly did for the car—not because he does not understand cars, but because I defy anyone to understand this one on an acquaintance of less than a week.

I went to the bazaars with —— to buy some eating utensils for him. We got them in crockery—no enamel was available. Next morning they were broken. Enamel is all that will last on this game. We found bully beef and Australian Army jam on sale in the hardware shop, and confiscated it.

To-night the heartening news came through of

the signing of the Armistice. It was almost incredible—not because it was unlikely; but because, after four years of war, this night of universal peace seemed unnatural. Could it be believed, as you lay in bivouac here, that this night not a shot was being fired in Europe? The full meaning of it all will come home after a few days; but not sooner.

12th November.

I must push on to Aleppo—without Karl and without the car; without Karl, because he is still bad—without the car because, even if Karl were better, I fear the car is now good for nothing. The wheels are breaking now; the cracks in the cylinders are now so enlarged that I fear if she gets superheated again they will split asunder.

From Signals this morning we got the terms of the Armistice. There is no loophole in them. They mean nothing less than a permanent peace.

I got the loan of a Corps car as far as Hama, and left the Mercédès in the Corps Park for overhaul (not that that will prolong her life by much), with instructions to Karl to rejoin her on discharge from hospital. He did not like being left. He was filled with fears of assimilation into the “mob” of prisoners, even after rejoining the car; for it is one of a “mob” of cars. But I think the worst Karl has to fear is that he will

be nobody's baby for a time after release from hospital; and not long after that the worst that will be facing him may be repatriation.

To-day I hear the —th and —th Regiments embark for Gallipoli. The report is they are partly for formal garrison duty in the forts of the Narrows—partly to set in order and register the Gallipoli graves. There will be a fine romance in this revisiting, as final conquerors of the Turk, the land in which we could not immediately conquer him. It will be strange to go about the forts at Chanak, from which we on Anzac used to receive such deadly messages—to visit for the first time the olive grove which held the lair of Beachy Bill—and to go about Anzac beach free from the fear of sudden death. It will be like returning home to search out the old dugout and smoke a pipe in it. What desecration if that dugout is not extant!

I left Homs at ten with — and —. Just to the north are those two white villages that airmen have mistaken for camps in the past—pure white settlements of cone-shaped dwellings that I defy you to distinguish from a camp of bell-tents at three miles, unless you have been warned—a parlous village to dwell in after reconnaissance by hostile airmen! These are the first villages of the kind we have seen in Syria.

We crossed the Orontes to the north of them

—the Orontes that had carved its bed deep between the chalk hills. The road we descended was being repaired by Bints. Bints do a lot of road-mending in this country—mostly in the way of lumping stone on the shoulder. They are brown and spare, and many of them are handsome—with eyes clear and fine through labour, and a kind of alert mobility in their tanned faces and a flashing smile for the traveller. It is always cheering to pass a group of these happy girl road-menders.

We reached Hama after midday. Homs is not beautiful. Hama is very beautiful indeed as you look on it from a point of vantage. There are many stupid travellers who see no beauty in a town which is not famed for beauty. They see (or they pretend to see) beauty in Damascus because it is a tradition to do so. They see no beauty in Hama because there is no song-cycle written about it—or because it does not appear in literature. And they have made up their minds before seeing Aleppo that they will see it beautiful when they get there. If they have eyes to see (which is unlikely), they are justified in seeing beauty in Damascus; but they are unjustified in passing over Hama.

The verdure of Hama as you come suddenly upon it surprises you as does that of Damascus or Jericho. All three are like green jewels in a matrix of desert. Ain Dûk and the Barada and

the Orontes are responsible for the most delicious surprises of rich colour in the monotony of sand and rock through which they flow. The green streaked town of Hama is flanked in the east by low and abrupt hills serried and terraced with dwellings, and on all other sides by the illimitable stony desert without a blade of grass visible. Almost as flat as the Libyan it is: only in the extreme distance rise bare shoulders of rock and clay as sharply defined as the limbs of a body. In Syria, until now, we have been used to see some trees and grass about us, even in rocky country. The rich vegetation of the Orontes here is doubly enriched by surroundings utterly barren.

In the architecture of Hama (there are few minarets) there is a fine mosaic effect as of a dark Moorish pattern upon the light-brown walls. The geometrical pattern of black appears on the larger buildings in such generous dimensions that you have the effect of it as you look on the town in panorama. In many towns you see it in detail. In the mass, as you see it here, it is very beautiful. The severity of the colour and outline of the pattern is heightened by the amorphous matrix of desert behind the town and by the irregular strips and patches of the Orontes green: the enamelled architecture of the town is all the more beautiful for this.

In the centre is the great bare mound of clay

whose base is laved by the waters of the river and fringed by its green. The Orontes creeps about it with innumerable deviations. This is the striking thing about the Orontes, either at Homs or at Hama: either by art or nature—or by both—the river is deflected into such a multiplicity of streamlets that they flash in unexpected patches through the green all about you. The river at Hama is sown with little islands bearing fruit and vegetables; there are islands of ploughed fields. The irrigating waterwheels are everywhere—great and small—in no regular formation along the banks of the river, but in the most surprising nooks and reaches, and inclined at all angles to each other. Those river-wheels of Hama are unforgettable. Narrow they are—incredibly narrow, the great ones—hollow, all of wood, strutted in a regular pattern with dripping, moss-grown spars and bearing on the thin and glistening rim the little buckets that splash their contents into the towering aqueduct. There is a chequered pattern of brown aqueducts above the green of the town as you look down on it. They are like high thin bridges of clay upon clay piles; framed in the graceful arches between them are the gardens of Hama.

There is a strange variety in the tones of the wheels. The small wheels hum like gnats. Of the great wheels one sounds like a giant oboe; it

VIEW FROM HAMA



From Hama
Looking
to the East

traverses a gamut of tones in a revolution ; it moves so slowly that a revolution lasts many seconds. Another groans incessantly, as though labouring in extreme old age under the intolerable weight of its water and its years. All day and all night you can hear the wheels of Hama ; for there is no stopping them. Most children here were born to the sound of them, and have never for a moment escaped from it. Surely it has an effect that is psychological.

On the margin of the stream about any wheel you will see a horde of women beating their clothes. The English method of washing clothes by friction between the hands is not approved here ; they beat them with great bats : from a distant point on the hills about Hama you can hear the vicious slap of bats at any hour of the morning. Children clad in the garments nature gave them swarm in the shallow water under the wheel by the Aleppo road. But there is no such offence as indecent exposure of the person (infant or adult) in Syria.

Later in the afternoon I dumped my kit at the aerodrome, and prepared to live there until transport could be had to Aleppo.

13th November.

I am with one of the flights of the Australian Air Force in Palestine. This flight is detached chiefly for the carrying of despatches. Occasion-

ally it does a "recco"—e.g. to-day it sent two machines, under Desert Corps orders, to try to locate a Mesopotamian Force expected at Aleppo. They found them all right—had lunch with them. "Recco" jobs are not sought after since the war is over here; pilots and observers justifiably try to avoid risk. In the fighting days no one was more brave—even foolhardy—than they. Now they owe it to themselves to take no risks. The weather is bad—gusty and stormy. One of these "recco" machines was nearly "done in" this afternoon, returning home. The engine cut out over the very aerodrome: there was a forced landing among the tombs that skirt it. By the grace of God and the pilot's own judgment, he landed in a small patch of open ground between tombs and railway line. There was some minor damage to the 'plane. A "cronk" engine may overtake a pilot at any time on this peace-flying. Death in the air when there is no war on would be tragic indeed. There is no joy-riding. Despatches are taken, in the course of duty, to Aleppo, to Damascus, to Haifa; and there is an end of it—except when a "recco" is ordered. Then there is real cursing.

They are great boys—these pilots. It does you good to live with them. Life is a glorious lark to them. They conform with Goethe's dictum that Life, if lived rightly, should be a kind of

glorious sport. Their fighting life is over. It was hard and deadly-dangerous—so hard that they now rest and take their ease with a luxurious fullness that would be impossible with men who had earned it less well. There is no work worth mentioning; the day and the night are long and monotonous; but it does not bore them. They have their rags and their skylarking—their golf and their scaring of Bedouins by the wicked little pom-pom they have salved—their walks and their tours into adjacent Hama. They are never *blasé*. The biggest event in the day is the landing of the Haifa despatch-machine, which brings them news and liquid refreshment—for they are cut off from the world. That little pom-pom is to be remembered. I don't know where they got it—nor where they got the ample store of shell for it. It is a kind of toy, not above a foot high, standing on its tripod. Its tiny shrapnel shell is only half an inch in diameter. But its vicious crack of discharge and its venomous double-burst at two thousand yards make it no toy to wandering Bedouins. The whole flight is obsessed with the duty of keeping the aerodrome cleared of outsiders, as is but fitting in young officers devoted to duty. There is a constant look out for straying Bedouins. When a group is spied on the distant margin of the 'drome—or even approaching it from afar (for prevention is a duty, too)—one

round is put in front of them and one behind, resulting in complete demoralization. Bedouins drop their bundles (literally) and scamper in all directions—excepting that of the landing-field. Donkeys stampede; camels loop off at a gallop. A third shot, lobbed nearer home, soon puts them completely out of the field of vision behind the hills in the east.

The officer-in-charge is a little man, of the same rank as all the subalterns he commands. "Commands" is not the word. He treats his authority as a kind of joke. So do they. But it is never questioned. When a job is to be done there is never any questioning of his "detail" for it. They rag him; but they love and respect him. "Remember, I'm your —— C.O.," says he with a grin and a portentous wink when someone upsets the crockery in a table-rag. "You! You're not a —— C.O's ——!" says ——, buried and writhing beneath the giant body of ——, who is sitting on him in the sand.

They live well, these chaps, with ample transport and ample tentage—luxurious marquees—electric light in mess and tents laid on in this wilderness—abundance of liquids to solace in the mess and abundance of chocolate and toffee, cigarettes and tobacco. All the mechanics have warm, dry tents and camp-beds. The officers have acquired fine, stable writing-tables and chairs

from the-Lord-knows-where. They said they "gave chits" for them to the townspeople.

All powerful was the "chit" in the early days; but they say the natives have now "got wise" to them. When the mess ran short of fresh meat they used to go out and "give a chit" for live sheep. But that's worked out; there is now a scheme to go out disguised as Hedgehogs (i.e. Hedjaz officers)—or "Hogs," as they are called affectionately—and commandeer sheep for table. I don't know how that will come off; but I suspect successfully. If they want sheep they'll get 'em.

They have Syrians working about the camp—working like mad as cooks' assistants and scavengers and drawers of water at the price of one empty petrol tin *per* day's work *per hominem*. They have a Hedjaz guard allotted by Corps; it is a thorn in the side, and is not treated with that respect due to a guard. And for this attitude there is some justification. For when the Hedjaz arrived and were told to sleep in the hangars they said it was too draughty. This was the height of finicking impudence. In these days, in this land and this weather, a hangar is a thoroughly comfortable home. But in the early days, too, they found the guard making a brothel of the hangar with the local Bints. This was the end of any scanty respect for the Hogs that may have

resided in the breasts of the pilots. They wired Corps for a British guard—though without stating the grounds explicitly in the telegram.

One officer a day can go as observer in the Aleppo despatch-'plane, and return next day. This is the nearest approach to short leave. But soon there will be one long leave in Australia.

14th November.

This morning we woke to see the great peak of Hermon in the east clothed in snow—"snow like wool." This is the first snow we have seen this winter. A biting wind is blowing from it. The weather has been bad. For three days there has been no despatch-carrying by 'plane: no 'plane has come from Haifa. There has been unusually heavy rain on the coast. The clouds have been lying on the plain before us at the feet of Lebanon. So high is this plateau that this is a possible phenomenon. But it's a curious one.

Pilots and men are beginning to chafe at the enforced inactivity. They cannot get their golf or their walking, or exercise of any sort. Yesterday there was an unwonted influx of officers to the fitters' workshop, and an unwonted access of industry there. They are all feverishly busying themselves on the cutting up of "props" and working them for souvenirs. There is sawing and planing, carving and polishing. Already, finished

biscuit-barrels and photo-frames have begun to emerge from this time-killing workshop.

Those electrically inclined have fitted the tenders with "gadgets" by which Bedouin nippers who hang on behind get an electric shock. When a tender stops in the bazaar it is wont to be assailed by the urchins, who swarm all over it. Now, the first one who puts his hand on the "buck-board" hops off howling and wringing his hands in pain and mystification. This is a kind of magic they do not understand; but they are "putting each other wise" to it. Now not even a half-piastre will entice them over the back of a tender. And when the tender stops you will see those who know egging on those who don't to clamber up. And when one gets caught, great is the rejoicing of the mob.

Bedouins are incredibly cruel to their beasts—even more cruel than the French. They thrash overladen donkeys unmercifully and unprovoked. Yesterday I saw an Australian give a Bedouin a terrible thrashing in the bazaar with his own whip for the causeless flogging of his donkey, that was staggering under a load he should never have been asked to carry. The Bedouin is the sort of fellow who would probably show his resentment of his thrashing by taking it out of the hide of the innocent donkey with another whip when he got it home. But it was a useful public lesson to the

potential fellow-torturers of donkeys who stood by and looked on. "He deserved all that," said the friend of the avenger. "Too right, he did—the —!"

To-day I met McBey unexpectedly. He had been to Aleppo and had his car in the Hama M.T. dock for repairs. Seated by the petrol dump, he was making a portrait of the company's motorcyclist. He had been sketching in Aleppo. He has amazing powers of concentration on the business in hand: squatting on the petrol box, behind his glasses, moving his empty pipe energetically at high frequency from corner to corner of his mouth, his large, delicate hands work with great sureness and rapidity. But the curious thing is that he can carry on a conversation with you at the same time—and a not-disconnected conversation. I think he must have two minds: perhaps it is with his subconscious mind he converses. I made to move away from looking over his shoulder. "Don't move," said he. "I know you want to see; and you don't distract me." He discarded his futile pipe. I fed him on chocolate. This did not distract him. "I've often been mistaken," said he, "for a circus, but never before for a menagerie. What time do they feed the sea-lions, Alf?" When putting on colour he has an unhygienic trick of pointing the brush in his mouth between dabs at his palette.

"Do you find that nourishing, McBey?" The habit is so mechanical that he did not immediately catch the meaning. But when he had guessed, he replied: "It lends to the colour a peculiar virtue it would otherwise lack." Some day McBey's stomach will succumb to this treatment: there will be another martyr who has sacrificed himself to his art. McBey has a way with sitters that would make them do anything for him. He is not courteous in words (as a fact, he is somewhat gruff in his commands for a change of position), but very, very kind and courteous in the relation he contrives to set up between himself and the sitter. He puts himself on an equality with the lance-corporal who is sitting—so that the victim feels, for the time being, he is his friend. When all is over, he thanks the corporal with a grace that puts him under the delusion that not himself but McBey is the debtor; a strange, but a charming, inversion. I should say that perhaps the only occasion on which the Commander-in-Chief was not the dominator in Palestine was when he sat to McBey at Bir Salem.

McBey came back in the car to the aerodrome to lunch. He has a passion for precious stones. So he could not fail to stop the car in the bazaar to look through the wares of a squatting Syrian jeweller-merchant. One alleged "antiqua" he dropped by accident in the mud during inspection. No-

how could we find it. Said McBey : "What is it's value ?" preparing to pay. To his dumbfounding, the fellow refused payment. McBey, thinking (with some reason) this was mere guile in the dealer before "droving it acrost him," asked him to make haste and make up his mind. But the dealer persisted. McBey insisted. The fellow was obdurate : "I no carey neither : me and you the *même*," was his formula ; and from that sporting attitude he would not budge. There was nothing for it but for McBey to hazard his own valuation, put down the money and depart. But the fellow could not be persuaded to take it in his hands ; and there it was left, lying in the dirt. This ought to be put on record in letters of fire : "An Oriental, on one occasion at least, declined baksheesh." Yet I cannot believe it. I choose to think either that he recovered the jewel early in the game by a sort of legerdemain, or that he read McBey in McBey's open countenance and judged he was safe for the future. McBey puckered and stared and muttered about this all the way back. He could not understand it. It absorbed him. But when we alighted from the car he had, with that curious "other mind" of his, taken cognizance of the fact that my driver has the smallest feet he has ever seen in a man, and said so. But I had not noticed it, though I had known him long.

He had lunch and was given an exhibition of fireworks with the pom-pom; and he sketched one of those curious canvas hangars to whose shape no geometrical description can be applied.

Then I returned with him and saw his Aleppan and Lebanon sketches, and his "notes" of Haifa and Beyrouth and Acre—and so "home," as they term it in the Army, in soft euphemism.

15th November.

I have waited long enough for Karl to come on with his car. If a 'plane had been going to Aleppo with despatches meanwhile, I should have gone by it. But the weather has been "dud"—and is like to be so indefinitely. Yesterday I heard that the first train was to run to-day over the repaired Hama-Aleppo rail. I decided on it.

I do not covet the job of the R.T.O., Hama. The bridge over the Orontes is down. His trains therefore cannot start from Hama station. He has to improvise a railhead in the desert on the northern side of the river. In fact, his work is one long improvisation. He improvises the fairway for lorries to load the Aleppan supplies—improvises the time-table of departure—improvises guard and drivers to run the train (by the look of them)—improvises fuel for the engine—that is, scrounges wood where he can get it; there is no coal in this country.

He advised me to be there at seven ; the train started at nine, in the end. I got up before the dawn, for it was a long journey from the aerodrome. The dawn is sudden in these parts in November, and night closes in in fifteen minutes. The dawn comes with a stride. It was a red dawn, firing the whole heavens—firing the head of snowy Hermon till it burned in the south ; firing the red earth about the camp till it took on the colour of rich blood. The titanic shoulders of the distant hills of rock were suddenly bared of their mantle of twilight. But the exceeding beauty of the earth just before the sun appeared passes description. The trains of camels looped past in the mist bearing their market loads. Long processions of women followed them, crowned with their burden of produce for the town. Their cries came faint up the slope. The waterwheels of the Orontes, hidden in the gulch of the stream-bed, saluted the morning in their solemn tones—wailing and groaning as though conscious of the inescapable burden of another day's work.

The tender set off for railhead through the acres of tombs about the 'drome—numberless barrows of clay and stone lie there. On all sides of Hama are these solemn burial-grounds. Through the outer town we passed, into the market-place, already heaped with melons, pomegranates, greens and forage, and made up the hill into the bazaar.

At the mouth of that roofed avenue of tiny shops we waited to let a convoy of lorries emerge (there is no passing of vehicles in that labyrinth). They rumbled out filled with French troops giving voice lustily to one of their lilting, infectious *chansons de route*. In the half-darkness of the bazaars the matutinal buyers and vendors huddled against the wall and pushed and dragged their donkeys into niches and alleys to avert collision with this intrusive overbearing vehicle of the "Ingleesi." So we emerged and ran beside the green fringe of the Orontes to railhead.

Hundreds of Bints were at work on the approach to the line, making straight the way with baskets of stones brought on their heads from the hill-side. Cheerfulness was the badge of the whole tribe. If there was not much dignity of labour here, there was certainly good spirits and good cheer in it. They greeted the car with a smile and gesture of salutation.

At railhead all was confusion of backing lorries, loading, and shouting of orders. I settled into the only carriage to get away from it—a compartment filthily dirty, with broken windows, decushioned seats, and walls ragged with the penetrations of machine gun bullets. It was a German coach that had evidently been shot from the air.

The journey to Aleppo is the most uninteresting

I can conceive in this land. It is unusual for you to travel far in Syria without being entertained by your surroundings; the map suggests that; and if you go by road to Aleppo you will have some wayside entertainment. But if you ever go by train I charge you straitly to take with you a good book. Take a good novel; or (which is far more interesting) take Dean Stanley's *Syria and Palestine*. That is an admirable book. Baedeker is superseded. Packed close with fine and exact scholarship, it is full of most excellent literary workmanship. Dean Stanley saw the significance of the things which most guide-books merely tabulate. He brought to bear on all he saw the light of a clear and untrammelled mind—untrammelled by the deep and scholarly historical research which he had practised but never allowed to obsess him.

CHAPTER XI

ALEPPO

MAHOMET may have called Damascus the Earthly Paradise. What he said of Aleppo (or whether he visited it) I do not know. I do know that Aleppo is worth a bushel of Damascus. Mahomet in the legend looked on Damascus from the hills behind Salhiyeh and was ravished by that delicious strip of Barada Valley that lies like a lovely green gem in the desert matrix. If you look at Aleppo from a height—no easy thing to achieve; it is so flat—you will see little of natural beauty. Here is no foiling Barada. You see nothing but a flat sea of house-tops with the bare island of the citadel rearing somewhat uncouthly from the midst. There is desert about. That is all—excepting the scanty orchards that lie on the fringe of the desert. The view of Aleppo as a whole is no more enchanting than the dreariness of the journey from Hama has led you to expect. The monotony of that journey has dispirited you. The bareness of Aleppo, with the naked citadel perched on the intrusive artificial mound, is at one with it.

Yet Aleppo is more charming than Damascus—more enchanting by far. I think the charm lies in the beauty of the domestic architecture and in the wonder of the bazaars.

As we threaded our way to the station through the suburban villas after the journey from Hama, it was pleasing and amazing to gaze on whole doorsfull of white-veiled women, who, at that distance, might have been English. An hour after we reached the station it was dark. That time was spent in searching for a lodging. McBey had commended the Casino—for its informality and cheapness and quality of food. It was full. The Casino commended me to the Hôtel Baron. "I haf only fife rumms," said the O.C. Casino. "At de ortel Barron dere are fifty. You vill haf a place dere; it is sure." But the Baron was full. They suggested the Hôtel Américaine. There I went—and found it full of Hedjaz officers. They were using it as a kind of sub-headquarters. They had an office in the sitting-room, which was crowded. They were talking very loudly and wildly, with wild gestures. But I think they accompany their normal conversation with fierce gestures. It seemed certain I should find no English here. For this reason I took the one spare bed with alacrity. I commend the habit of mixing with the natives of a new country. It always seems a terrible waste of opportunity that can never be

made good, this English practice of clubbing together in "furrin parts." When Englishmen are abroad they have a habit of seeking out the English-speaking club and spending most of the day there. They will never dine with the natives, refusing to give the exotic dishes a trial. They will not go to purely native theatres, but frequent *cabarets* and *cafés chantants* and casinos in which Western influence is sticking out a mile. Lord Bacon was unanswerable when he said: "When he"—the traveller—"stayeth in one city or town, let him change his lodging from one end and part of the town to another; which is a great advancement of acquaintance. Let him sequester himself from the company of his countrymen and diet in such places where there is good company of the Nation where he travelleth. . . ."

So I put my traps in the only bedroom available—opening on to the huge eating-room. The glass of the door had been smashed. As I washed for dinner the Hedjaz came in twos and threes gaping in upon this intrusion soaping his hands in the tin-basin. Next door a company of officers were "drinking up big" on Arak at the end of the day's work, and indulging in a form of Hedjaz horseplay that was hard on furniture.

They did not use this place for eating—only for drinking and conducting their business. I ate alone at eight-thirty, and went after to visit

M. —, Directeur de la Banque Ottomane, to whom M. —, of Damascus, had given me a note.

A bridge party was in full blast. There was the towering M. — with his wife and adult daughter, and a host of officers of the Fifth Cavalry Division. The Syrians love to receive the conquerors. At that house I met a Greek who took me after to his lodging, and who proved useful in the next three days. He was awaiting a passage to Jerusalem by English train and motor-lorry. And since he had nothing better to do, he offered to show me Aleppo next day. What more could one desire? He introduced me to his landlady and her husband and her niece, and showed me about their fine house. That house was a type of the Aleppan dwelling, with its stone floors, its carpets in lieu of pictures, and its casements. The casements I had admired as soon as I entered the city. Every house has its casemented balcony of fine lattice. You cannot think what an impression of cosiness a street of casements gives you. You visualize, behind those casements, the family in the window-seats looking down upon the world-in-the-street. And often you see the fair girls at it—fair girls commanding the whole crowd from the eminence. It is a combined impression of cosiness and superiority. They never seem to tire of the pastime: the life of the streets always interests them in a country where family

life is so strong. But it is the *tout ensemble* of the whole street full of casements—triangular, rectangular, octagonal—that charms. And when you see the casement from within and look for yourself upon the throng below, you know on what good foundation the charm of the casement rests for those inmates who use it every afternoon.

The carpet is the best of all mural decorations—so rich and so simple. Those gorgeous Ispahans and Shiraas are all that pictures are, and more. They have the colour and the form of pictures, but they offer a warmth and harmony unknown to the disparity of mere pictures. You are spared the crudity of picture-frames. Only one room in ten thousand achieves harmony in its pictures: a few rich rugs upon the wall will look after their own harmony. Rugs upon the wall; rugs on the floor; a couple of mother-o'-pearl tables, and a low stand with beaten tray containing a vase and an ash-tray; a few chairs of amorphous build—this is all the furniture a Syrian room needs to please. The Englishman who buys brass and rugs in the Mousky will be hard put to it to bring them into harmony with the rest of his English furniture when he gets home. Unless he dismantles his whole room, throws out his pictures, and goes direct for Eastern simplicity in the whole, he will have unpleasing incongruity to look on for ever in his suburban London house.

The old man sat silent under his tarbush ; the old lady smoked cigarettes without intermission ; *la jeune fille* talked garrulously in French of her one visit to Alexandretta and of her schooling in the Lebanon. My Greek friend spoke English, and interpreted for the old people.

When I returned to the *Américaine*, the Hedjaz were still drinking up on the National Spirit. As I undressed they came again and peered in at the broken window. A mug of water, flung with a spreading motion, damped their curiosity.

The bazaars of Aleppo are roofed, as all the bazaars in the rainy country of Syria are. The roof gives that effect of a cubby-house which you never gain from the Cairene bazaars, that are open to the sky. Besides, this closing in adds richness. The undiffused light heightens colour, and the confinement of a roof magnifies the heaps of wares and the fruit ; it magnifies the sense of profusion that is Oriental. But apart from this virtual exaggeration of profusion, there is actually greater profusion in Aleppo. The areas of commodities here are better defined than in any other bazaars I know, and the quantities of those commodities are more generous. The Butchers' Bazaar is the most arresting, because the most strange. I never saw a Butchers' Bazaar elsewhere ; hundreds of yards of meat strung up there. But the butchers are the cooks too. Each butcher's shop is a

restaurant. They roast the meat in tiny cubes on spits that revolve by I know not what means round a brazier. And behind that echelon of carcasses you may sit and consume your roast beef—or roast camel or horse, as you choose. And if you want more than beef the butcher will send the waled for a dish of sweets from a neighbouring bay, and for coffee from another quarter, and fruit from another, and some *vin de Liban* from elsewhere. So you have a hearty composite meal.

But the best meal of all in the bazaars we used to get in a restaurant installed in an old tower above the Khan Saboon. We climbed by a dark and rickety stairway on to the roof of the shops and entered the eating-house in the base of the tower. The Italian proprietor (who is also the *chef*—and the waiter as well) attends and invites you to come to the kitchen and choose for yourselves, since he has no *menu* card. So you go with him to the range and inspect the simmering dishes, and make your order on the spot: “I’ll have some of this—and this—and a bit of this—and a little of that.” By some miracle of memory he fulfils your order with the others. He brings in the dishes in turn with his cap on the back of his head and a fag between his lips, uttering little pleasantries from the depths of his paunch whilst he serves, and is thoroughly gratified by your

relish of his *cuisine*. Although the service is not just dainty and the attention somewhat informal, the cooking is of the finest—highly charged with Syrian savouriness. The only defect is that you never know when to stop. Appetizing is the adjective for it: appetite seems to grow with consumption; the more you eat the more you want. It is only by a conscious effort of the will—a deliberately reasoned mortification of the flesh—that you pull up and ask for coffee. But I don't deny that the morning tour of the bazaars may have sharpened appetite. The excitement of seeing so much that is new spills your nervous energy and gives you hunger.

Informality is the note of all Syrian restaurants—but especially of the Aleppan. There was one restaurant in the Greek quarter where we always had dinner at night. There the most extraordinary visitors came, not only for food but for entertainment—for conversation with the proprietor and his wife. These good people would take sides in the altercations of their patrons at table. The *chef* would poke his head through the window of his kitchen and join in too; as he would ask of us in his loudest tone what was the English for such-and-such—that he wanted to improve the English nomenclature of his profession. The butcher would come in leading his little boy and carrying beneath his arm a whole kid, skinned and

dressed for to-morrow's cooking. He would sit down with this on his knees and enter on reminiscence with the proprietor at the money table. The cook would enter the dining-room and give his opinion on the kid before purchase. And when the butcher had gone and work was slackening off in his kitchen, he would return and play dominoes with the proprietor's wife whilst the fag-end of the diners dealt with their dessert.

In general you would take your dinner, less sweets, in the restaurant, and repair for your sweets to a sweets-shop proper—of which there is a plentiful distribution in any Syrian town. There, of these seductive morsels, you would make another meal. Someone should write a book of praise of Syrian sweets—those dainties compact of nuts, honey and fine flour, encased in their sweet fibrous mesh and touched with the suggestion of perfume that (contrary to the custom of perfumed flavourings) does nothing but enhance the dish.

Morning was the best time to ascend into the citadel. One is driven to think of the citadels of France by contrast with the citadel of Aleppo. The citadels of Artois and Picardy and Normandy bear woods within their walls and grass upon their slopes. Most of them are very beautiful. The Aleppan citadel is perched on a gaunt artificial mound that shows no sign of verdure. Only after you have ascended do you see grass within the

wall. The nakedness of the citadel is the more marked for the extreme flatness of the city. But apart from that, its height is enormous. Its sloping sides beneath the wall are faced with stone to the moat. Its bridge is of great rough stone. Its crumbling wall is of colossal lumps of rough-hewn rock. Enormously strong the place is—as are all these Syrian citadels reared on artificial eminences. Down the Syrian plain was the natural route for the ancient invaders of Palestine. At places like Homs and Aleppo, where natural eminences are so conspicuously wanting, mounds had to be reared ; and since they had to be reared they were raised to no half-hearted dimensions. It is inferred that in the days of their building labour was cheap.

The crown was full of tombs ; and the tombs full of Turkish military documents—as though these were the tombs of enemy orderly-rooms. An English officer, with an interpreter, was rioting amongst the litter, unearthing specimens of polite military correspondence couched in language that smacked more of diplomacy than of a military headquarters. But it is likely that diplomacy coloured all the military correspondence of this Turco-German force.

Far more absorbing than the tombs and the documents was the panorama from the top of the wall—the picture of the flat white city with the sparse cluster of minarets—of the thin fringe

Handwritten note:
Hodgson's horse at Aleppo 1918.



HODGSON'S HORSE AT ALEPPO

of orchards letting on to the rolling desert, streaked with the rails that would bear you to Homs in the south or to that point of junction in the north from which you might make your choice for Constantinople or Baghdad.

The third day I went out to Muslimie Junction. The armoured cars lay near the station, beside the long white Baghdad road. These were the cars that had so often cleft a way for the swift-moving cavalry—that had languished on the shores of the Dead Sea before the fighting began; but which, once the advance had reached its stride, tore into enemy towns too astonished to fire a shot, raced upon aerodromes and forbade the German aviators to ascend, thrust a way into long processions of enemy transport on the main roads, and behaved generally in a manner quite in keeping with the forceful and abandoned aspect of the men who manned them. Here they were languishing again at the Muslimie Junction. The Armistice had put a rude end to all their fun: they prayed either for more movement, or to be sent home incontinently. The duty of idling about “in case” was giving them livers and *ennui*. It was as bad as moping about the Dead Sea shore—worse; for they had lately tasted the exhilaration of commanding movement and inciting opposition. There is a good deal of propaganda nonsense talked about the impatience of infantry-in-rest

to be at it again. There is little of such impatience amongst infantry, except in the newspaper accounts of them; but amongst the personnel of these armoured cars there was genuine *ennui* during inaction.

You almost looked for a more imposing locality of the parting of the ways for Baghdad and Constantinople. But it is a very drab piece of country, with a very ordinary railway station—now broken and burnt, with some gutted out-houses. These were inhabited by the Headquarters of the Cavalry Brigade and by a detachment of the Australian Flying Corps stationed there to receive the despatch-riding machines.

That night I visited a *café chantant*. Aleppo has many of them. Now they are crowded with Hedjaz, drinking Arak and coffee and consuming appalling quantities of *hors d'œuvre* from a selection of tiny plates. They are great feeders, the Hedjaz. They eat heartily at meals. And before their dinner they make the equivalent of a full meal for an hour off these radishes and cheeses and fragments of baked meat; and late at nights they may be seen in any of the sweets-shops gorging by the *kilo* those sweetmeats that soon surfeit the English, but which these fellows can gobble indefinitely.

Some Syrian women are in the gallery that overlooks the herd in the *café*. The herd is threaded

by hawkers, as in all Oriental cafés. They are selling cakes, whips, eggs and figs. The large pipes are drawing. Turbaned boys are searching the crowd for pipes in which the tobacco is not burning well. They bear braziers of glowing charcoal, from which they dole out a couple of coals to any mound of tobacco that is languishing. Above the music that is generated on the stage you may hear the click of the gamblers' counters. At every table they are gaming.

There are fifteen in the band. Only two are men—the pianist and the 'cellist. Some of the girls play violins and drums and double-basses. Some play nothing; they are there to encourage the rest, and to ogle the audience and chew gum. They wear short skirts. They are elevated five feet above the audience. They cross their legs. There is a prodigal display of *lingerie* and of thigh. It incites the herd. Either side of the stage is a kind of green-room with windows opening to the audience. To this the Bints repair between their musical efforts. Men from the audience there repair to drink with them. There is a very strict understanding that you cannot sit in those rooms without drinking with a lady from the band. This was explained to me when I entered. Drinks I found there very dear—and the company not worth the extra money. Very frequently when you buy a strange girl a drink in a Continental

country her entertaining manner and conversation are worth the outlandish price of the wine. But these girls were so thoroughly abandoned, through a long period of segregation with Turks and Germans (and now with the Hedjaz ruffians), that they were not even amusing. And when a girl of the promiscuous class is no longer amusing she is abandoned indeed.

At the conclusion of each performance by the band, one of its lady members canvasses the hall with a tambourine for baksheesh. And she does very well.

Usually there was a sprinkling of our just-repatriated soldiers in these audiences. You could always spot them by their piebald civilian clothes and their Cockney caps. They were generally to be seen "telling the tale," in a very flushed and fervid fashion, to some receptive Tommy who had only been to the war. They were given a perfectly free hand in this city—the first, of Allied occupation, most of them had inhabited since the fall of Kut. They were the only soldiers in Aleppo who had a permanent pass into the city. One night, about twelve, I found them in possession of the stage of one of these *cafés chantants*, administering a concert to the assembled Syrians and Hedjaz. One of them was impersonating a curate to the rippling accompaniment of his friend at the piano. The band had cast aside their instru-

ments, thoroughly enjoying a night off. It was a great success. And it was very amusing to see the natives of the country in the audience trying to join in the lilt of "Down where the Swanee River flows" and "The Long, Long Trail."

The loveliest memory of Aleppo is of walking at late night about the byways of the city under the great moon. Those streets of casemented dwellings are beautiful by day, but lovelier far by night. The clatter of the streets is quenched: the cry-laden air is merely luminous. One casement in a street is made solitary by its yellow fretwork of light. Some vendors of fruits and nuts are still sitting by their wares, or trundling them almost silently about the cobbles with the swinging lamp. Subdued and effortless street-cries float fitfully upon the quietness—effortless because there is nothing but the moon-flooded emptiness of the streets to contend against. The starving children that shiver have ceased to shiver—wrapped in their rags and their exhaustion, they are sleeping in the nooks of wall and doorway. Some are perhaps dead; for they die daily—and nightly—under your eyes. In the loveliness of the night you are spared their piteous cries for food.

CHAPTER VIII

LEAVES FROM A SYRIAN DIARY—ALEPPO TO BEYROUTH

22nd November.

I left Aleppo at 9 a.m. The train was packed with three hundred repatriated prisoners; this delayed us. This city, which marks the junction of the great lines to Constantinople and Baghdad, was for them the real starting-point of their journey home. The journey from Mesopotamia to Aleppo had been the merest preliminary to it. Now they really felt they were going home, as they assembled to board the train: for they knew they would go south to a Syrian seaport, and thence board the English ship that would carry them back, after that exile, which only the fittest had survived, to the English coast and the English towns and meadows, the English friends and the English singing. Repatriation is a hard, insipid, official word that does not so much as suggest all that is meant by "going Home" after such an exile.

You could see the excitement of it all flaring up in the faces of these men as they assembled to go aboard. It was clear that until this hour had come to move down through Syria for home they had not realized what their liberation meant—though their liberation was now some days old. It was heart-shaking to watch them; for in their joy (which ran too deep for hilarity) you read all the horror of their captivity; only a kind of quiet trembling joy was in their eyes and faces. Had they been more noisy it would have affected you less.

The Aleppans were infected—for it symbolized their own deliverance from the Turk. They came about the soldiers in the station yard in quiet groups, gazing in wonder on the subjects of that miracle as great as that of their own freedom (but there were some not so overcome that they could not hawk cakes and fruit loudly and rob the men who were their comrades in freedom). Especially the women and the little children looked on open-mouthed. It was only when the train moved out that they broke into cries of joy and bade farewell exultantly to the slow-moving train. Then the hearts of the men were loosened too, and they broke into cheering.

The journey to Hama was as uneventful as it must be over such country. We stopped perhaps four times. No one knew the length of stay at

any stage. But many lit fires at each halt and got on with the boiling of water—only to seize it when lukewarm and jump aboard the inexorably moving train.

At Hama was a huge convoy of motor-buses to take them to Tripoli. They got aboard and moved off in the late afternoon beside the lovely Orontes; and that was the last I saw of them. They would sleep on the road at Homs that night, and next morning would be in Tripoli.

I went to the Australian Flying Corps to sleep, and found them about to move in the morning for Rayak. All the hangars were gone; the 'planes had flown down in the afternoon. Canvas had vanished and was aboard the loaded lorries. Only a couple of wooden cookhouses were standing, round which already the Bedouins were crowding thick for what might be left when we went. After bully and tea we spread our valises on the stony ground in the dusk and turned in.

23rd November.

We rose before the dawn in a thick mist. The Bedouins were there in hordes, fighting and jabbering over empty beef-tins and bits of timber. The mist was full of them—like invisible noisome evil spirits. The Bedouins are a contemptible, bastard race, lazy and greedy, whom not words nor blows can insult. Shots were fired into the air to scare

them ; but nothing will scare them from scavenging. We moved off, twenty lorries, and left them to their wrangling.

At Homs we halted for lunch. I went to the hospital to see Karl. He was quite restored and eager for evacuation. But his car was *mafiah*. It would never run again. It had been replaced. I took him to it where it stood in the pool of Headquarters cars and left him there, somewhat sad, for disposal. It is only the uncertainty of his immediate future that saddens him ; for peace with Germany establishes itself apace—or gets established. Yet no German is free from uneasiness in the face of that Armistice clause which provides for “ immediate repatriation of all Allied prisoners without reciprocity.” They see at least a further vague period of captivity. It would seem that the arch-instigators of dirty warfare have something more to fear—judging from the significant provision (veiled or open) which the terms of the Armistice have made for sheeting-home crime to them.

After lunch we entered on the northern end, of the Baalbek Valley. Here the Lebanons converge into encompassing walls—so close that at sundown the level rays give their heights an unnatural sharpness of definition, and there is a gulf of sudden darkness between them even whilst their crests are blazing.

The last four miles were traversed by the lorries on the stony railway track. Late experiments in irrigation had made the roads here impossible for heavy transport. Irrigation is all very well—in its place!—as someone remarked when the lorries creaked and groaned and rattled over the sleepers and the loose ballast. It was hard on steering gear and hard on rubber. But at last they turned aside on to hard ground beyond irrigation, and we drew up in the dusk beside the mosquito-infested stream—source of all our late troubles. No one who had a net neglected to “bring it into wear” that night (as they say in the Army); for the winter is not yet so far advanced as to have ousted the mosquito; and “a man would be dead stiff” (as they say in the Australian Army) “to slip on malaria at this stage of the game.”

Somehow—no one seemed to know how or at what stage—two civilians had stowed themselves away for transport to Beyrouth—great fat, Syrian, tarbushed merchants they were, who, judged by their prosperous aspect, ought to have ridden in hired carriages. They now emerged and showed themselves to the general mass of soldiers. When the sergeant saw them and their goodly frames, he swore they should pay their passage in good money to him and to the drivers of the lorries on which they rode. And the event proved that they did. They had the appearance of war-profiteers

—so well fed and well groomed in this starving land. The Australians hate these overfed Syrians with the ingratiating smile and facile pidgen-lingo. Next day there was some bad road that had to be picked and shovelled. The sergeant saw his chance and ordered them to fall to with a pick. To the prosperous citizens with soft hands and pendulous paunches physical labour was the highest indignity. They demurred with sickly grins. The sergeant gave them their choice between falling to and being left by the way in the heart of the Baalbek Plain. They chose the former. They grunted and sweated; and everyone who looked on in joy could have translated their profane and sullen silence into burning invective. But not a word escaped them. They gave up the tools, when all was done, in sweaty exhaustion, and with hypocritical grins of friendliness by which they forfeited the remnant of any souls they may ever have had, and crawled into the buses.

To-night they brought forth ingratiating Arak—that booze more evil in its effect than any other spirit made. Thoroughly demoralizing is Arak. It is nothing to the credit of Syrians or Arabs that Arak is their native beverage. The prurient mind is inflamed by it; it feeds lasciviousness; it brings forth brawling and fornication; and in its reaction it is a dope of incredible potency. Britishers would not recover from drunkenness on

Arak for days. Syrians inured to its effects drink it nightly and copiously. You see its effects in their aspect : it was but fitting that our passengers should bring Arak forth.

24th November.

Sunrise was wonderful. So steep are the walls of the Lebanons, that whilst the whole face of Lebanon is aflame with the morning the slope of Anti-Lebanon is black.

By the middle of the morning we were running beside the source of the Orontes, which, in a narrow, flashing rivulet, races north beside the road. It runs for ever as a kind of symbol of everlasting life in the heart of stony barrenness, inspiring its tiny verge of smooth green grass. The Orontes here, together with its fringes of green, one could leap across. The sage Romans turned it into short aqueducts with grain mills at the northern end. Perhaps we counted a dozen such tapering terraces of stone in five miles, with Bedouins and their asses waiting about the mill door by the thicker end to grind their grain or to receive the meal from it.

As we neared Baalbek the verdure became more frequent—and with it villages. For here we were amongst the multiple contributory sources of the Leontes and the Barada. Elongated groves of poplar were strewn along the banks of these tiny

wadys, and pretty, red-roofed houses clustered amongst the streams artificially drawn from them. Very beautiful is this part of the Plain; and very beautiful the villages sheltered in the gorges that divide the feet of Lebanon—those feet that are now ablaze, with their volcanic colour enriched by the yellowing vines that are splashed upon them. I think the Plain of the Lebanons must be at its best in the early winter. Apart from these habitations and these verdured streams, the whole country is strewn with stones—stones—stones—grey stones—that only enhance, in their sombreness, the colour of tree and dwelling and rich slope of the lower Lebanon. And by the snows that now crown the range of Lebanon the richness of colour in the Plain is enhanced a thousand-fold. With the war “as good as over,” in the midst of this wealth of colour, and with the good wind blowing keen off the Lebanon snow, it is fine to be alive.

The Indian Lancers are encamped amongst the groves of this valley, far north and south of Baalbek. We reached Baalbek at midday and walked about the ruins, that seemed to have gained grandeur since last I saw them. But that is probably because when last I was here there was no peace on the earth—whereas now there is no war. The Kaiser’s commemorative tablet was gone from the wall of the Temple of Bacchus. A cluster of

Mohammedan families were having a picnic amongst the tumbled columns of the Temple of Jupiter. Wearing their yashmaks, they seemed to be only half capable of free enjoyment. But they were having their jokes; and I suppose that somehow they contrive to eat and to suffer bad colds with this harness about their faces. Anyhow, they had good grub—no end of savoury meats and goodly pastry and coffee, and (I regret to say) Arak! They answered our “Saida, Bint!” with amused smiles.

We pushed on down the valley to the junction where the Rayak road turns sharp to its town lying red and factory-blotched under the shadow of Anti-Lebanon. At the turn the Syrian passengers got down with some reluctance and paid their fees, full of complainings that they were not being transported to Beyrouth. But at Rayak we were staying two days; and farther than Rayak they were not to be allowed to go with us—at any price.

We reached the town at dusk and got under canvas.

25th November.

Rayak was the chief Turkish ammunition dump for this Front. It was also the chief German aircraft park. Lying there between the Lebanons, it would supply with equal ease the coastal towns,

Aleppo and Damascus. We had bombed it badly ; and Allied troops had taken it before destruction of its stores was possible. But all the aeroplanes had been burnt ; they stood in irregular echelon with their charred tails in the air. Very little ammunition had been exploded ; hundreds of tons of it were in the act of salvage. The station buildings had been burnt. They were being reconstituted to cope with the traffic by rail to Homs and Beyrouth.

It was a depressing locality—the sense of destruction and pillage was so strong about it. Such desolation was unfitting in so lovely a valley.

The Flying Corps with which I had just moved from Hama was soon ensconced. There was great boredom amongst the pilots. They spent their time in rooting about the *débris*, making conjectures on the use and working of the aerial mechanical devices they came across on the ruined aerodrome, and in sitting in the mess and in visiting the neighbouring English mess.

The table-conversation there always amused them.

“ Freightfully topping lunch,” says C—.

“ O, *ra-ther*!—*dam* good ! I’m *awf*’lly bucked.”

“ Make a long arm for the sort, old bean.”

“ Give the butter a fair wind, old dear.”

“ I met Captin Howes this morning—the chap who was in Mespot.,” says Peters. “ Just come

through from Palistine. He had four boxis of kit. Off to Tripoli to get the leave boat to the Suiz Canal. They put them off at Kantara now. He's going to Blighty next month—says he will spend all his time at the Palis and never do a job o' work again."

"Bet the Churchis don't see much of him, Peters."

"Priceless old thing, Howes, y' know!"

"O, freightfully!"

"Been in every show up to Damascus."

"I mean to say, such a cheery old bird," says J—.

"What I mean to say is, so fearfully nice," says K— (who up to now has not opened his mouth).

"So freightfully sort of generous, too. D'you know, you chaps, when I buzzed into his tent, *dam'd* hungry and freightfully fed up, after the second Gaza show, he sort of treated me like a brother—you know, kind of took possession of me sort of thing. *Dam'd* good, he was—sort of couldn't do enough for me. The old man blew in. 'O, Sir, this is —, awfully old friend of mine. I mean, we've known each other for years sort of thing, Sir. . . .'"

"I know a major-man, you fellows," says P—, "an absolute topper—I mean to say, top-hole chap. I met him before the Beersheba show,

when we were sort of hogging it in the sand. He was most frightfully kind, y' know. I mean to say, he was awfully good to me. I remember I met him one day just as he was going to mess. 'O,' said he, 'come and have some food, old bean.' I sort of bucked up, you see, and followed him in.

"Ai said: 'Ai say, old chap, this is a bit thick, y' know—blowing in like this—an absolutely foul thing to do. I mean, look at—'

"'O, come on,' he said; 'food's on,' and he took me in and sat me beside a colonel-man. By Jove! some lad he was! I felt an awful rotter—sort of butting in like that. Anyhow, the colonel-man said: 'Make a long arm for the whisky, L—, before the food comes. Cheerio, old bean!' he said. 'Here's to crime!' He was some lad—I mean——"

"Well, for God's sake, say what you mean, you old —," says J—.

"I mean to say, awful decent, you see," says —, ignoring the logical bearing of J—'s interjection. . . .

For the rest, these pilots amused themselves with visiting neighbouring villages, collecting ammunition for the pom-pom and "ranging" with her, bathing in the Barada and discussing the chances of rejoining the squadron early and going home.

26th November.

I left Rayak at nine in the morning, discarding the first inclination to go to Haifa by rail through Damascus, Daraa, Semakh, Afule, in favour of the inclination to go more quickly by road over Lebanon, through Beyrouth, Sidon, Tyre and Acre.

I bathed in the Barada before breakfast. Very cold it was, with the wind off the Lebanon snow; but there was bright sunlight. By the road to Molacca there were no dead Turks, as on the last occasion; nothing but the dew on the yellow vines and the stones and the carcasses of horses which the birds and the sun and the jackals had not yet finished.

Zahle, tucked up in the gorge above Molacca, was good to look on in this early morning. Zahle is good at any time. The girls and the cafés and the private houses of Zahle were known and loved by many men stationed at Rayak or Molacca. Some went there to visit the ladies; some "to drink up big"; some to spend the evening with Syrian or Jewish or French friends. Some would go up on succeeding nights to do each respectively.

We had lunch on the crown of the Lebanon Range. Though the snow was on the high peaks all about us, the air was mild even in the height of the pass. It was beside the bridge of the rack-

railway we stayed. That demolition made by the Germans was now repaired. Our engineers were working on it when last I crossed. It was a bad break. Here is a picture of it before its repair. The mountain railway now runs daily from Beyrouth to Rayak.

From the western slope of Lebanon the view was perfectly clear. Far along the coast, far along the slopes, the detail was thrown up. All the fertility of this sea slope was visible; and the contrast of that fertility with the barrenness of the East was strong indeed. "His fruit shall shake like Lebanon." It is only the slopes that overhang Beyrouth and Tripoli which can be the source of this simile.

So we passed through the sunlit fir groves of outer Beyrouth about the middle of the afternoon and down the rugged city streets on to the sea front. You cannot conceive how rough the Beyrouthian streets are, even in the heart of the town, nor how careless the denizens of avoiding mechanical transport.

That night I made arrangements to travel by sea to Haifa—by drifter down the Phœnician coast.

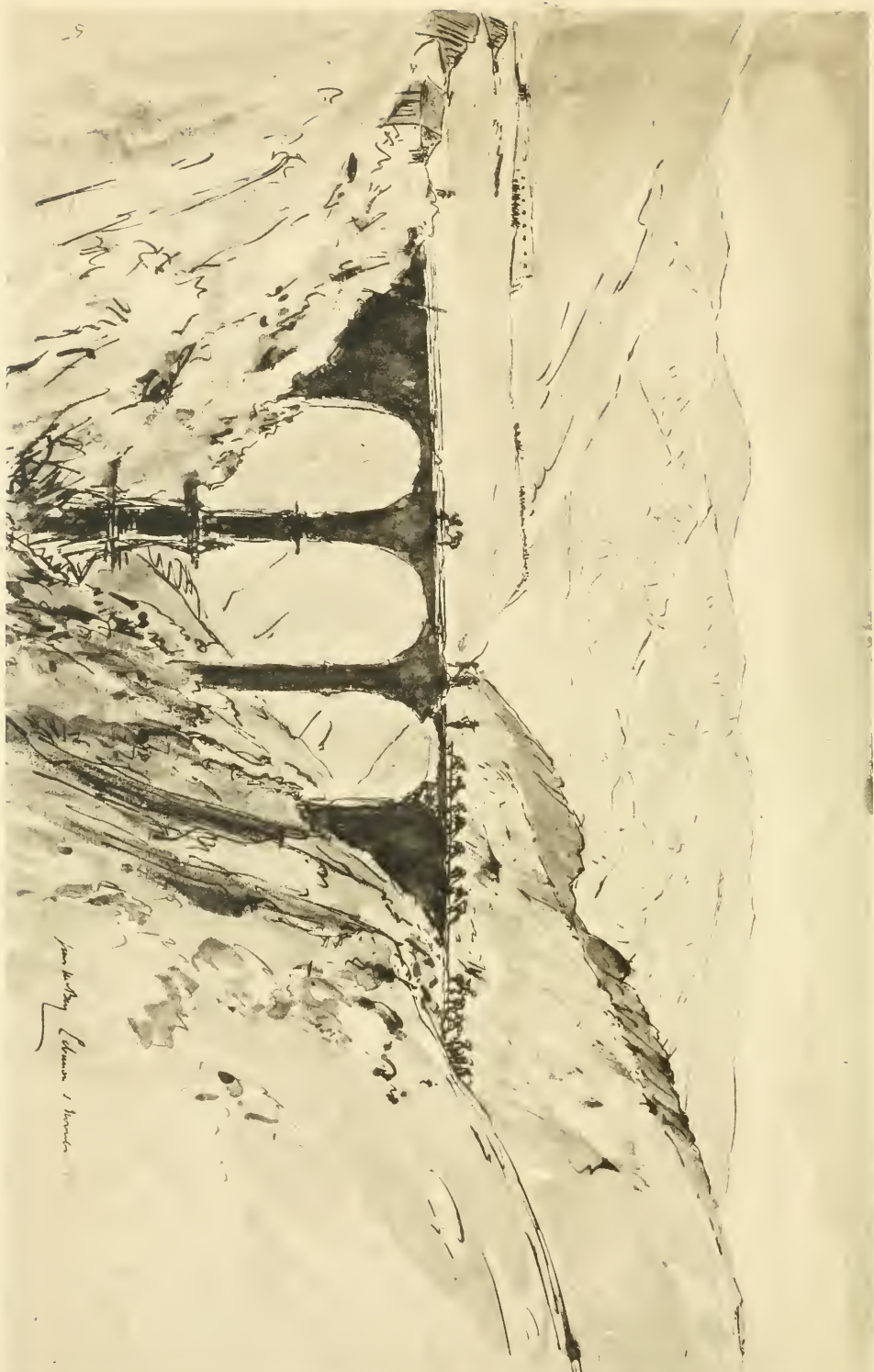
CHAPTER IX

TREKKING AFTER THE TURK

THE Turkish rout that began west of Jordan on September 19th is almost unprecedented in completeness and in the ease with which it was accomplished. It was comparatively a bloodless and uncostly victory. This was in part due to the depletion of the Turkish *moral*. But there were other reasons for it: there was some very clever Bluff that "came off" before the attack commenced; and the Light Horse were given swords.

G.H.Q. created an atmosphere before the attack which led other people than enemy spies to believe that that Headquarters was moving to Jerusalem; the inference from which would be that the main attack would come in the Jordan Valley. The Fast Hotel at Jerusalem was ear-marked for G.H.Q. with placards that bore no uncertain sign. The sentry-boxes for the guard were erected at the entrance. Signal wires were put up with a

THE DAMASCUS-BEIRUT RAILWAY



J. W. B. 1890

prodigal hand to cope with the abnormal demand that operations would make on them. Officers at G.H.Q. who were not "in the know," but who would move with that august body, actually scouted round Jerusalem to get good billets over against the period of their sojourn there.

This was one piece of Bluff. The other aimed at creating the expectation that we would land at Haifa in force and work in. There was no harm in the fact that this was a conflicting impression with that that our main attack would come on the Jordan. The more you can set the foe at cross-purposes—so that he does not know how to make up his mind or where to start to prepare defensive positions—the better. But certain it is that when we captured Turks round Jenin they said with one consent: "You've come from Haifa. You landed there." And the Bedouins in the area said the same. The faculty for successful Bluff is the great and humane quality of fine generalship. It saves lives by thousands. It is more than fine tactical ability in attack; because it may even render attack—excepting the feint—unnecessary. It was largely Bluff that gave us the triumph of a bloodless evacuation of Anzac. It was largely Bluff that allowed our Light Horse to take several thousands of prisoners at Jenin at the cost of two men wounded.

But it was more than Bluff. It was the swords, too—though the swords involved the element of Bluff, to the extent that all good cavalry work is compact of it. It is the moral effect of a charge with swords that wins—and not sabre cuts. Machine guns and rifles could withstand cavalry in superior numbers if only the enemy would stand to their guns. But the enemy that will do that is still to seek. In face of a body of galloping swords the bravest will falter and break, where, rationally, there is no excuse for it. The cavalry charge is the chief of all forms of Bluff in warfare. In the hands of our Light Horse swords could be trusted to work at least their normal effect of demoralization. The normal effect was probably, in this attack, surpassed. They are superlatively good horsemen, these fellows. That counts for a lot. It counts for more than people think. The man with whom clever and agile riding is automatic will inspire his horse and raise the spirit of a charge above the normal cavalry level. Furthermore, these Australians were spoiling for fight; and the swords gave them the chance of the most conceivably exciting sort of fight that there is. Australians are not notoriously good at sitting down and holding trenches indefinitely in France. They are still less good at drilling for months, inactive in the monotonous desert in Palestine. And that's

what they had been doing. They were half-dead with *ennui*. They hungered and thirsted for movement. If that movement was directed at the annihilation of the enemy who had been the cause of their enforced inactivity, they would address themselves to the business of movement with the greater zest. And if that movement took the form of charging at the gallop with the brandished sword—why, so much the better—and so much the worse for the ill-starred foe.

There must have been implicit in the minds of the Light Horse the memory of the Anzac failure—implicit, at least. As a fact, it was probably explicit. Anzac had failed because we had not had a chance. Here the chance was good as any Australian could ask. There had been no room on Anzac, and we had lacked numbers. Here was as much room as a bushman could wish; we had the numbers for “a fair go”; we had horses; and there were swords thrown in. Those who are not Australian-born can hardly conceive the inspiration of the horse to these men. They love horses intensely. Most of them, as civilians, spend most of their day on the horse. Many of them had suffered the loss of the horse in their imprisonment, as infantry, on Gallipoli. To get back their mounts was like being armed with another weapon of peculiar power—because the horse inspired them

to fight better. In swords they actually had another weapon of extraordinary power, in its psychological effect on an enemy. With horses, with wide open spaces to gallop upon, with swords, they were powerful indeed. But more powerful weapon than horse or sword was the memory of Gallipoli and the resolve to retrieve, in the face of the old Turk who had fought us there, the defeat of that unhappy expedition. It is possible that in that immaterial weapon you have a deciding factor in the success of the Australian fighting here.

Anyhow, the result was that, at any point where the foe was faced with the heart-shaking spectacle of charging Bill-Jims, he incontinently threw up his hands. The foe was not all Turk. He had a generous sprinkling of German and Austrian. But this does not imply that German or Austrian is a stouter fighter than Joe Burke (as he is facetiously called). I don't believe he is. In defence, the Turk has always had a stout reputation. On this occasion, defence there was none. On the contrary, the Turk retreated about fifty miles in the first two days. I trekked up in the wake of our force with the Australian Mounted Divisional Train. It is doubtful whether, even in the mobile warfare of South Africa, a Divisional Train has covered a distance of fifty-five miles in forty-eight hours. But on the 19th and 20th of September

this one did. There was no stopping for sleep. But sleep was not the question. The question was: Could the animals stick it? The answer is: They were mules. There were horses too; but they were few; and at the end of the journey the difference in staying power was abundantly clear. Horses could have done it without undue exhaustion over easy country. But this route was incredibly hilly and sandy. It is true that on the second night out most mules refused to carry on, in a bad patch, in the early hours. But with an hour's spell, combined with a little judicious flogging, they were refreshed. All honour to the mule!—that curious brute, compact of stubbornness, ugliness, and inhibited sexual instincts. It is the brute that makes no attempt to procreate its kind. The moralists will probably hold it up to the human incontinent, saying: "See here. Such powers of endurance are the reward of continence. Therefore mortify the flesh and be as they." Heavens! and be as they!—with that ungainliness and that perversion. But of course the public moral-reformer is wrong and hasty in his inference here, as he is wrong and hasty in general. He mistakes for continence the automatic safeguard of nature against further mongreldom; and he infers incontinence in the procreating horse. And so he blunders on.

And yet the physiological reason for the mule's

staying-powers would be good to know. It is probably bound up with his low organization—with his entire lack of sensibility—even intelligence. It has its parallel in man. Men of low intelligence have greater physical staying power in purely mechanical work than the highly-bred, highly-intelligent. The highly-organized horse has an actual mentality ; which cannot be said of the low-down mule. If the horse were more obtuse he would probably last as long in a pull on the roads as the hybrid. It all agrees somehow with the general notion of utility that we attach to mongrelhood—when we say that the mongrel makes the best house-dog and the mongrel barn-door fowl the best layer, and so on. All honour, I say, to the mule—not for what he is, but for what he has done for us.

Whatever the reason, the mules finished clean and the horses jaded. They watered twice in those two days ; but this was not putting them to the test. Mules can do without water longer than horses ; and horses in Palestine warfare have been known to work three days without water.

We lay outside Sarona, in bivouacs, on the night of the 18th. We knew that next morning at four the barrage would fall. By a process of auto-suggestion not subtle, I woke at five minutes to four and lay waiting for the drum-fire to begin

with almost as high a sense of expectation as though I were directly involved in it. You could not tell when the first gun thundered. There probably *was* no first gun : there was the simultaneous crash of hundreds. *Réveillé* was not till five. But most men were up soon after four, sitting under the avenue of sweet eucalyptus that had sheltered us during the night, listening—and talking fitfully. Before the dawn the 'planes had droned over, bent on preliminary bombing. Now it was light they came in shoals, "to carry on" (as they would say) "the good work." They droned and wheeled and raced, with not one Archie to say them nay. The dawn came up in splendour over the Maritime Plain. We were but two miles from Jaffa. Her towers glistened by the sea ; and her palm groves stood silent in the early morning glow. It was a dewy morning, intensely quiet. No breath of air was stirring. It was unnaturally quiet about us—the more so for the detached thunder inland. About six the barrage lifted. This brought that ominous quiet which had but one meaning : that the infantry were "into it." The calm of our surroundings was intensified by the knowledge.

At seven our convoy moved through Sarona—threading a way through supplies and ordnance and waiting transport and wide-eyed civilians into the outskirts. An hour's trek in the desert

brought us in view of the distant shell-bursts. For by this time the guns had recommenced—those of the Turks countering; ours shelling the retreating enemy. At some points there was concentrated fire in the sand-dunes. If you have seen bombardment only in France, you have little conception of the mess one burst will make in the sand. It is as though a mine had exploded. A whole mountain of dust rises. Under a concentration of bursts the landscape is effaced: you see nothing but an immense wall of light dust, smirched irregularly by the dark, wicked contents of the shell.

About nine the first convoy passed bearing back our wounded in motor ambulance. Strange with what significance you look on the first convoy of casualties from any fight. It symbolizes much to you—as the first thunder of a barrage symbolizes much. You become inured to both later—inured to heavier barrage and longer convoy. But the first is always heart-shaking.

So is the first sight of an advanced Headquarters in the sand symbolic. The herd of motor-cars and saddled horses and motor-cycles—their waiting in readiness and their constant coming and going—are all pregnant with meaning—to use a hateful phrase that for once is appropriate.

By midday we had passed through the congestion of traffic in camels, lorries, wagons and troops on



2700

STRANGE SIGNALS

from Sydney)

the move—artillery, Indian Lancers and Light Horse—beyond advanced Headquarters. And by the middle of the afternoon we were upon our last night's front line. Here were our scooped-out trenches—our honeycomb of dugouts. In the immediate rear were our lately-used gun-positions, with such an aspect of recency about them that you almost looked for smoking shell-cases. But all you saw were the shallow pits and the netted *camouflage* and the abundant litter of bright shell-cases, eloquent, in their freedom from rust and tarnish, of their recent use.

Towards evening we came upon the multiplicity of Turkish positions—and of British shell-craters and of Turkish dead—and (what was of more significance) of British bomb-holes. "Caught in the act"—the act of retreat—was the impression you gained everywhere. From no other source will you get such a vivid impression of panic and terror and demoralization as from looking on the effects of the aerial bombing of an enemy in retreat. Half-miles of shattered transport blocked the road. Dead horses and dead men mingled thick with it. You could see where, in the extremity of terror, transport had turned from the road to escape the Flying Horror overhead: all in vain. Bomb and machine gun had done their work. What one 'plane had missed the next had caught. For understand, retributive reader, that there

was no *lack* of 'planes. And as fast as they were rid of their death-dealing load they returned for more. The hideous thoroughness of it all recalled Elijah's Old Testament exhortation to annihilate the prophets of Baal : " Let not one of them escape."

All that night we trekked on. Progress was slow. The mules were tired. The country was under deep sand. The way was uncertain. I left the wagon and walked a few miles, examining abandoned Turkish positions in the moonlight. In all there was the same atmosphere of unpremeditated flight—wagons standing half-filled with equipment, huts undismantled, tethered beasts hungry and parched.

We stopped for water about four, by a wady, and picked up an escort of a squadron of Light Horse. For roving parties of Turks from the rout were numerous ; but not inclined for fight, I think. That midday we lunched in a Bedouin orchard, but without dessert. In the afternoon we passed a Turkish railhead with a captured train standing in amongst all the litter of a railhead—litter of supplies, fuel and meagre Turkish ordnance ; for Turkish equipment is a very simple thing. So are Turkish food and Turkish transport. Their staple diet seems to be dates and dried leguminous stuff of one kind or another ; and the staple transport a tiny wagon one-third the size of our G.S. Turkish personal equipment seems to be what they left

home in. I do not think there are any re-issues in that Army.

That evening weariness began to show itself in earnest—in men and animals. Men slept fitfully on their horses and drivers slept fitfully in their seats, though the road was rough and difficult. After midnight we were held up two hours by transport ahead in the rocky pass that opens to the Plain of Esdraelon. In this interval weariness found respite. It was very cold. But spare men slept in the dust by the wagons, and the drivers slept sound at the reins in the cold wind. Just before daylight we were through the pass, looking down on that Plain, as clearly defined amongst the hills as a Scottish lake. This was Lejjun—ancient Armageddon—our destination, for the moment. The men slept like mad.

Here the prisoners began to arrive in force—"prisoners for miles," as they say. It looked the rag-tag and bob-tail of an army. No attempt at uniform was there; or, if there had been an attempt, it had failed signally. The people of the East are well known for their informality in dress. But for the acme of that you are commended to the Turkish Army we captured in September. Very footsore, very dirty, very emaciated its members were. The Germans were less so. They had taken reasonable care of themselves. There were women too—wives of officers generally—who came

on camel or donkey, in gharries, in mule-wagons, with their faces covered. Some of them were nurses. There were Turkish generals, German officers of high command, Austrian doctors—all mounted or in vehicles. But the mob walked. The guard was sparse: no need for more: no fear of desertion from these sordid ranks. Nay, along the roads of the Plain of Esdraelon parties of Turks approached the road continually and implored to be taken. The Divisional Train (unprecedented phenomenon!) itself made a bag. The cars of Brigadiers were stopped and importuned; but Brigadiers were too busy to do more than point the way. For even this the conquered seemed grateful.

Along with the prisoners streamed our wounded convoys. They were camel trains here: we are too far advanced for motor transport. The camel with the *cacolet* is the vehicle of the wounded man from the advanced dressing-station. The *cacolets* moved over the Plain in long surging trains of white—surging to the motion of the beast. But when they came near you saw the *cacolet* linen was bespattered—white only in the mass. The popular idea is that the *cacolet* is hell for the wounded man. But the camel's motion is perfectly rhythmical, and is possibly less painful than the jolting irregularity of a motor ambulance.

Here I left the Divisional Train and went on to

Jenin, ten miles within the Plain. The Germans had established a large aerodrome, which they had left hurriedly; but not before setting it afire. It was smoking as I came up to it. Skeletons of burnt machines stood gaunt about the landing field—mere blackened frame and engine. The hangars were demolished. It was one of the places we had bombed before the attack; and of that there was ample evidence in craters—no mean craters, neither! There had not been time to dismantle the Orderly-room. From those records and correspondence files Intelligence should hand us out something interesting. Neither is it like the German to have left his petrol and oil dump undestroyed. But he did—probably because he couldn't help it. There can be no other reason. There were thousands of gallons of petrol; and from that we worked, for our own ends, the German lorries that had been left intact on the aerodrome. What was of still greater importance, he had left intact his wine-cellar in a cave on the hill-side. This may be hard to believe; but it's true. The R.A.F. may have the reputation of "doing itself well." But, believe me (as the Americans say), it cannot compare with the German. If it be true (and it is) that the German Air Force in Palestine had become ineffectual, the reason may lie partly in that cave on the hill-side. Few English private cellars ever ran to those dimensions. I

can't give an estimate in gallons; but the cave was twelve feet high, say a hundred and fifty deep, and eighty in breadth. Choked full it was with champagne, wine, rum and cognac. Champagne predominated. The throats of the conquerors were slaked indiscriminately until the Brigadier learned of it and posted his strongest and most trusted guard at the mouth.

The town—what should be said of the town? Who shall describe the litter indescribable—of orderly-rooms, wagons, horses defunct, cooks, travelling medicine-chests, military post-office—all the abandoned material of a Headquarters? The main street (and several others) was literally impassable by a car. Not until the Town Commandant cleared it could traffic proceed. His was the unenviable job. He had to clear the town, organize guards and controls, receive prisoners, and be beset by the grasping inhabitants claiming from our force the covering of damages obviously caused by its predecessors. They literally mobbed him. I saw him last the centre of a clamorous group on a fair way to drive him demented.

It was curious to note how the local salesmen—even the local barber—carried on in the midst of this welter, having changed over placidly from the *régime* of the Turk and German to that just established.

A Turkish Hospital was still at work—very hard

at work upon enemy casualties—staffed by Turkish and Assyrian doctors and German nurses. The wounded were pouring in. The surgery was rough and ready. They invited you to watch amputations. It is time there was an amputation of this narrative.

CHAPTER X

IN GERMAN FOOTSTEPS

ONE cannot escape the feeling, in going through a captured town which the Germans have used much in Palestine, that they asserted themselves very forcibly amongst the Turks. Their good standing with Enver must have given them a powerful "pull" amongst the Turkish soldiery. Even amongst the waste and ruin of such a town you will gain the impression that the Turk was the dupe of the Hun. You feel how the proud Teuton must have despised, in his heart, the miserable Turkish Army. Indeed, you feel he did it more openly than in his heart. When he looked about him upon the Turkish force and thought of the military splendour of the Fatherland, he must have loathed this people with whom he found himself fighting. For there never was snobbishness of quite so intense a quality as that of the German military caste. English class snobbery is nothing to it. The snobbery which inflicted itself on German civilians, as we know that of the class-military in

Germany has, any time this last fifty years, must have felt defiled by mere contact with the poor little Turkish Army. If the German officer in Berlin was wont to treat his own civilian countrymen with that contumely for which he is notorious, the despite he showed towards the unhappy Turk must have been galling even to that unpretentious race—that race which had brought him to fight in a land as miserable as the race itself.

“This is mere conjecture,” you will say. “You are construing the attitude of the German into what you suppose it might be from a general knowledge of his temperament. The fact probably is that, if only for politic reasons, the German stood as a humble brother-in-arms with the Turk, sharing poverty and misery with him in the common campaign.” But there is more than surmise in it. It is fairly evident, from an examination of the towns and the land we have overrun, that the German preened himself amongst the humble-feathered Turks, and was prepared to do anything except share-and-share alike. This is not hasty inference from the fact that Liman von Sanders ran for all he was fit, leaving his unhappy Turkish command “to it.” You saw evidence of German super-comfort and super-equipment and super-feeding and super-accommodation everywhere. It struck you first and most forcibly in watching the droves of prisoners come in. Where

Turkish officers walked, German officers were mounted on donks, on camels, on gharries, on any vehicle. You can fairly safely infer that at the time of capture all these means of locomotion were available equally to Turk and German. But it was not the Turk who ended on them. It was consistently the Hun.

But it was in a captured town you saw the contrast in many aspects. Take the matter of grub alone. I lived in — for three days. There was much captured provender there—Turkish and German. I had brought bully beef and biseuit. But I did not eat any of it. I lived chiefly on German M. & V. and German tinned-sausage and dried fruits. I had often heard of this ration in France, but never tasted it. To taste it was to spurn bully. All the Turkish food consisted in sparse supplies of dried legumes. There is, of course, the national difference in diet to be reckoned with. But if you base your comparison on quantity alone, you will see how well the German fed by comparison with “Joe Burke.” The same contrast held true of the food found on captured Turks and Germans.

And of drink—what shall be said of drink? It was not a Turkish wine-store that was found; but a German. And such a store! One can almost visualize the Turk humming round for a drink—gazing with deep and thirsty envy on

the German plenty, in this hot and debilitating land. Such stores of wine and champagne you might have looked to capture from Germans in France; but that you should find them in this benighted "furrin" land shows with what resolution the Hun had set out to "do himself well" at any cost. It would have been generous to suppose such stores medical comforts. But circumstantial evidence left no opening for such benevolent doubt. This strong liquor was there to be guzzled—to maintain the efficiency of the already-fit Teuton. For how could you look for efficiency from him if you broke him off his traditional drinking habits simply because he was in a strange land and transported drink was difficult and costly?

Our Brigades will tell you that one of the things that astonishes the captured Turk most is the ubiquity of our mechanical transport. As he marches down to the cage he is stupefied by its multiplicity. You don't have a German exclaiming in this way. He did not lack M.T.: the Turk did—woefully. Captured lorries and motor-cars are German. Captured Turkish transport is the miserable little wagon that a Newfoundland dog could almost drag. Nothing Turkish expresses Turkish poverty more strongly than his meagre animal-transport. Between Jenin and Nazareth you will see the havoc wrought by our airmen

upon retreating transport; and there you will get your clearest notion of how the German out-classed the Turk in his method of moving himself and his stores.

Of clothing and equipment little need be said. The Turk is in rags of greater diversity than any slum can show. The Eastern informality in dress has run mad in the Turkish Army. You know well, as you look at it, that this is no deliberate Oriental informality, but an informality forced upon the Turk by sheer poverty. It is the more pathetic beside the comparative splendour of the German uniform. No one blames the German for this contrast, so markedly in his favour. We would do the same ourselves if it was in our power in such circumstances. But it is a striking commentary on the notion that the German must have despised with a keen contempt the rag-tag-and-bob-tail army with which he found himself associated. It is a commentary on the German's downright assiduity in securing his own comfort. And what is more significant is the manner in which it suggests the depths to which Turkish *moral* must have fallen.

There are some pathetic aspects of the German Expeditionary Force. It is unwarlike to put yourself in the place of the German and pity him as part of this forlorn expedition on the barren soil of Palestine. We have ourselves and our friends

to pity. One does not pity the Hun; but one visualizes his self-pity in the last phases of this forlorn campaign before the attack overtook him. Galled by his native sense of superiority in education and arms, it must have been hellishly humiliating to him to know how slight was the hope of victory in collaboration with that army he despised. A hint of this appears in some of the letters one comes across in the German military post offices that were taken after the rout. There was a great bulk of sealed undespached private mail. The German letters home were not inspired with that confidence in victory which colours the letters from the field of an optimistic force.

Of German Sisters we saw something in captured hospitals—those hospitals that were carrying on at a fierce pace the succour of the hourly-arriving wounded. Between these nurses and the Turkish Sisters there was a contrast—but less strongly marked than that between the soldiers of these races. But women, busy with this negative form of warfare, are less indicative of the temperament of their army than the combatant part of it. Between German and Turkish wounded you could see the difference very plainly; but between the women there was more equality in bearing.

CHAPTER XI

BOMBING AT NÂBLUS

THERE was promiscuous bombing of the retreating enemy in open country all over Palestine in the September advance. But there were two famous occasions on which the Turks were "caught" in column of force in the long defile of a rocky pass: once outside Nâblus, once outside Damaseus. The terrors of being bombed in the open country are slight by comparison with the horrible inevitableness of an aerial attack in a mountain pass. In history there is that notorious attack by sharpshooters upon the column retreating from Kabul through the Khyber Pass in the Afghan War. The fearfulness of that touched the imagination of the world at the time. Out of sixteen thousand only Dr. Brydon reached Jellalabad. Yet though the lurking horror of sharp-shooting from behind the high boulders of that pass must have been terrifying in its deliberateness, it is not to be compared with the infectious horror of panic which overtook the Turks in these passes when they were crowding there in such

multitudes, and when the air was aswarm with deadly humming 'planes flying below the top of the pass walls, dropping bombs very thick and spitting bullets without ceasing; and when there was no escape, either by hastening ahead or by turning aside into the short and shallow wadys, where a little-delayed death overtook the fugitive. Death would have been easier if, by urging and hastening the column before, they could have even given themselves the impression they were fleeing from pursuing wrath above. But so cumbrous and so multitudinous was that mass of lumbering horse-drawn vehicles and men afoot, that for all its terror its pace could hardly have been hastened from slow walking to fast walking, even if the head of the column had not been blocked. But that was the first act of the avengers. So faithfully was the head of that column bombed that nothing behind could pass over the wreck and thick carnage. Then you can conceive the horror of that imprisoned multitude cowering from death that swept and reswept the air above it. They say it is wonderful how the mind, in sudden fear of threatening death, will delude itself as to the effectualness of the most ineffectual means of protection or escape. Drowning men clutch at straws. Men in a bombing raid get under canvas. These unhappy Turks, one imagines (nay, our airmen saw it; and it is because I talked with a friend who bombed that Nâblus

column that I write this), crouched beside boulders no higher than a soldier's pack: all in vain. They huddled beneath their flimsy carts, to be unseen—as though that would save them: alas! in such a case airmen hardly need aiming eyes and bombs and bullets hardly need direction; much less are wagon floors protection. There was no escape, right or left; there was only the delusion of a blind wady that was raked in its turn. The victims were too hard-struck by panic to think of firing on the 'planes in defence—those 'planes that were roaring over the pass at two hundred feet.

This took place in the most beautiful Vale of Shechem; for Nâblus (Vespasian's *Neapolis*) is that old site of Abraham's first halting-place after crossing the Jordan on his way from Chaldea. "Under the 'terebinths of Moreh,' now superseded by the more useful olive-trees, Abraham rested and built the first altar which the Holy Land had known." "Nâblus is the most beautiful, perhaps the only very beautiful, spot in Central Palestine. Monsieur Van de Velde, who approached Nâblus from the richer north, after speaking of the grandeur of the Gorge of the Leontes and of the hills of Lebanon; of the wild oak forests and brushwood of Naphthali; of the mountain streams of Asher; of Carmel, with its wilderness of timber-trees and shrubs, of plants and bushes, says: 'The Vale of Shechem differs from them all. Here there is

no wilderness, here there are no wild thickets, yet there is always verdure ; always shade, not of the oak, the terebinth and the carob-tree, but of the olive grove—so soft in colour, so picturesque in form, that for its sake we can willingly dispense with all other wood. Here there are no impetuous mountain torrents, yet there is water ; water, too, in more copious supplies than anywhere else in the land. . . .”

“ We had returned from a ‘ recco ’ over Haifa,” said this young airman. “ On landing, they told us of a ‘ good target ’ in the Nâblus Pass. So we loaded up and went to it. Far off I could see the thick, cramped herd between those rocky walls—like an ant-swarm. Very soon we were close above that sea of upturned faces. We wheeled, dropping bombs on the head of the column—and wheeled again, dropping more—and again and again—until all our bombs were gone and the mess was piled thick in the entrance to the pass. Then we set our course to rush along the length of the column with the Lewis guns. But, turning into the pass’s mouth, we were faced with the imminence of a collision with a D.H.9. By a miracle we got out. But by nothing less. This made us look about us : and there was the air ‘ lousy ’ with ‘ planes—at least twelve in close proximity to us. The news of the good target had been spread. The vultures had smelt blood

and flocked to the carnage. In so short a time that you would almost think a signal for it had been given, we were formed into a kind of rough queue, waiting our turn to enter and rake the pass. We were so many that that was the only practicable course. We wheeled about in short circles at varying distances from the mouth of the gorge, and as soon as all was clear before us swept down into the defile and set both guns spitting. When its length was traversed we rose and re-turned to re-enter. This every machine did until all her drums were used and all her bombs were fallen.

“Never shall I forget the fear I saw expressed below. Never before had I flown so nearly above an enemy as to see it. My bombing until this advance began had been ‘from the blue’—whence the aerodrome or railhead itself was but a tiny patch. But there, from 200 feet (and less), I could distinguish not only individual faces, but the horror upon them. Above the roar of the engine I could hear the shrieks of the wounded and the cries of fear of those who would soon be struck. I felt no man there could believe he would live—with this raucous horde of death-dealers rushing down upon him, and returning to the swoop again and again. Little groups, as we bore down on them, would hoist a white rag and throw up their hands. But what is the use of surrendering to the air? And how can those be spared in the

general slaughter whose surrender you cannot take ?

“ We returned to the aerodrome empty—to refill. But the squadron commander said we need not bother. He had received intelligence that there was nothing more to be done in the pleasant Vale of Shechem.”

CHAPTER XII

WORKING WITH LAWRENCE

THE military work of Colonel Lawrence is only beginning to be known. Probably his work as an archæologist at the British Museum and in Arabia is not very well known either. In any case, that does not make so wide or so popular an appeal to the imagination. In the end, no doubt, Lawrence will be remembered chiefly as the man of few words, but of great deeds, with the Hedjaz Force in the rebuffing of the Turk. He deserved a nobler force than that ruffianly mob of Arabs, whose alliance we sought from political motives and not for their prowess. But it has always seemed to me that Lawrence probably enjoyed himself far more with these extremely irregular banditti than would have been the case had he found himself furnished with a small, perfectly disciplined army of English soldiers. Those who have seen the Hedjaz Force at work in Syria (they call it work), or at play delivering the bastinado in Damascus, or have even seen them advancing in column



LT.-COL. T. E. LAWRENCE, C.B., D.S.O., M.C.

o' lumps on the cinema-screen, will know what an irresponsible or barbarous or irregular army Lawrence had to wrestle with. Yet, I say, he probably enjoyed them. There is more than a streak of informality in Lawrence. Perhaps his habits of immersion in research have made him indifferent to the details of deportment and personal appearance. When he was not disguised as an Arab in Cairo he wore the garb of a very slovenly British officer. Yet this may be doing him an injustice. There was a price laid on his head by the enemy. It was, perhaps, a measure of self-protection that led him to appear a nonentity in slovenly dress in Cairo. The pilot who ferried Lawrence by 'plane to the Haurân told me that one day he encountered the "Uncrowned King of Arabia" on the terrace at Shepherd's, dressed as a rather disreputable-looking Arab. He knew he was making no mistake as to identity when he accosted him. Lawrence, for reply, gave him a stony stare of unrecognition—and explained later, when taxed with the discourtesy, that it was possibly as much as his life was worth to acknowledge his friends in the streets of Cairo. He never knew who might "do him in" there for the reward. With his Arabs in the desert he felt safe. They would never betray him. They believed him a prophet sent by Mahomet to deliver them from Turkish domination. He had no fear that they would, for money, deliver up their deliverer.

When war broke out I believe Lawrence was doing some excavation amongst ruins in Arabia. He came to Cairo and was given a job in "Maps" there. All officers from the Middle East know "Maps, Cairo," whence their "issue" maps came. Most men of average horse-sense could do a job there. But it became known that Lawrence had a profundity and exactness of knowledge of the Arab language and mind that could become invaluable to his country once she had decided to join to her the Hedjaz Army. I know not by what stages Lawrence became its organizer, leader and adviser. Certain it is that it was as such he first was known among our officers in Palestine. In particular, it was as such that he became known to certain pilots of the Air Force—and to the Australian pilot who did this carrying of Lawrence for strategical purposes.

The first Lawrence job of this pilot was to locate him east of Amman and bring him back to G.H.Q. Lawrence has been set to isolate Deraa by cutting the railway-line beyond it. If no news had been heard of Lawrence three days after his work was due to be done, P—— was to find him. There was no news; so the search began. A landing was made in the mud-flats and larva beds of the Roman fort near Azrak. There were no locating points for Azrak on the map. An aerial photograph of the position was all that P—— had. After

long search he saw something below which seemed to approximate to the photograph that lay before him in the cock-pit. A landing was made in that ground, which "just takes your tail skid"; and there was Lawrence, with his job done.

"We started back for home. But Lawrence said he wanted to see the German aerodrome at Amman. So we circled over it, and were badly archied. This was Lawrence's first experience of anti-aircraft fire. He didn't mind. He took a kind of detached interest in it, and was intensely absorbed by the variations and progress of the enemy shooting; for progress they made. So much so that it got too hot for me, and I cut out. Then Lawrence said he wanted to fly north of Amman to see the railway bridges there. So we went, and were archied again. But Lawrence insisted on seeing what he wanted. . . . It was to my intense relief that he at last pointed homewards.

"At G.H.Q. he got two machines (of which mine was one) to go out and stay with him four days. In the vicinity of our stopping-place he was engaged in more cutting of rails. This is a — of a job to be mixed up in. The Hun 'plane is constantly on the look-out for it. Whilst we were at breakfast three Hun scouts arrived for the first bout of bombing. Suddenly, as one man, the Hedjaz with us 'made for the bush.' 'Don't

be alarmed,' said Lawrence, 'they always do that when a Hun comes over. It's rather unfortunate; but there's no holding them. Every German bomb that falls I reckon costs me fifty recruits.' S—— and H—— went up in pursuit of the attackers and brought down a two-seater. The rest of us took what cover we could get in the hut. It didn't last long. And after it there was peace on the front for two hours!

"But when the scare was over and those Hedjaz who had not permanently deserted returned, they became a terrible — nuisance. To the same degree as they were scared by the Hun 'planes, ours inspired them with confidence. They showed such faith in our *quies tiara* and the supermen who flew it, that they could not be got to leave our side. Their affection took the form of pinching gadgets from the machine to carry with them as charms. All sorts of valuable things were going—including instruments from the cock-pit. One brute I found trying to detach my compass—and told him what I thought of him; but I could not get him to leave the vicinity of the 'plane. Lawrence overheard me reviling this chap. And he came to me ten minutes later and said: 'By the way, one of these fellows seemed to be giving you some trouble. Would you mind pointing him out to me?' 'Yes,' I said with alacrity. 'It's that cross-eyed — over there.' 'Oh, thanks,'

said Lawrence. I heard no more of it till lunch-time at the door of the hut. 'By the way,' said Lawrence, 'with reference to that Arab who was troubling you this morning: I remonstrated with him. But he was a little intractable. So I hit him in the stomach with the butt of a rifle—and there he goes, somewhat painfully, over the rise near that wady. I probably caused him some inconvenience.' "

One could imagine how Lawrence would do such a piece of correction; with very few words—and very prompt and effective acts. . . . He could afford to handle him in this way. The Arabs were deadly afraid of him. They were actually in awe of him, as divinely appointed. Arabs of the Hedjaz Force have entreated to be allowed to throw themselves before Lawrence's horse in the manner of the Juggernaut victims. This is a very profitable position to be in with relation to those over whom one holds a military command.

"We had to work hard out there. You can't imagine what the labours of a pilot are who has to do a good deal of flying and be prepared to chase raiders, and at the same time be his own mechanic and rigger. I'm convinced that the mechanics on an aerodrome work hard—with overhauling the engine, filling drums and petrol-tanks, cleaning guns and rigging the 'plane. A Hun bombed whilst we were at it. I had to drop tools

and chase ; and by the grace of God he crashed ten miles north of Deraa. I got down and resumed the cleaning. Suddenly there was a whirring aloft, and there were all the — Hubajuz taking to the bush once more. By this time I had wind up *kiteer*. I was relieved to find it was only the Handley-Page — bringing (God be praised !) petrol,ammunition, ‘mungaree,’ and mechanics. She landed ; I shall never forget the amazement of the Hedjaz at this, their first sight of a super-’plane. This was the most *quies tiara* they had ever seen ; and they said so—in no measured terms. I reckon the arrival of the Handley-Page did more for Lawrence’s recruiting than any gold that had been offered the Arabs. For gold was the inducement —gold and jack-knives and wrist-watches. They are true South Sea Islanders in their love of gauds and baubles. Lawrence said he rarely travelled without a load of gold and watches. Recruits would always listen to reason if these could be shown them. In fact, the chief means (the only means, for a layman) of distinguishing a corporal from a sergeant in this comic force was by the fact that the corporal wore one wrist-watch, a sergeant two.

“ This was the last of hostile aircraft as far as I was concerned. Three days more I spent patrolling over Lawrence, whilst he with his mob blew up more railway lines. Once from the air I saw

them charge a train. It was the funniest thing I've seen in this war. They were all mounted, of course. On foot their formation is irregular. On horse they are more irregular still. All distinction between privates and other ranks is lost. They tear across the desert towards the objective yelling at a pitch that could be heard easily above my engine, with robes and head-dress flying and with a most villainous and indiscriminate discharge of musketry into the air. There is no thought of firing at the enemy. Once the Arab is armed and mounted, he consistently expresses excitement by discharging his rifle into the blue. If bullets were not reaching the enemy, they were whizzing about the 'plane—and puncturing the wings, too. So we cleared out and left them to make their capture."

Lawrence appears at least to have done much damage to railway lines with this force of his. But one suspects he did most of it with his own hand. What are you to do with an army in which every soldier considers himself a sort of brigadier? When Lawrence was going on a "stunt" with these men, he was in such a position through their assumptions of equality in rank, that it was practically necessary for him to reveal the whole plan of campaign successively to every individual who was to take part in it. More power to Lawrence! The wonder is he ever accomplished anything with them. If all academics (Lawrence is an Oxford

Fellow) could show such ability in practical affairs, we might have won the war sooner. One tries to conceive the typical Don dominating a mob of howling Arabs. But one does not succeed in conceiving it.

BOOK III
CAIRO REVISITED

CHAPTER I

ROD-EL-FARAQ

IT lies on the banks of the Nile, this village. For purposes of the State it is known as the Grain Port of Cairo ; for private purposes (which should, according to the best political authorities, coincide with those of the State), it is the place of the felucca and the *café-chantant*. Yet Rod-el-Faraq is picturesque enough, looked at merely from the point of view of the State. A very pleasant afternoon you can spend there watching the dhows of grain disgorged by their human machinery. They lie there, with their low-weighted gracefulness of shape, with high, tapering prow. They are like a broad gondola ; but a very broad one. And, of course, there is what you miss in a gondola : the long tapering mast stuck in the midst—abnormally long, to take all the breeze that is going about this River of Doldrums. When these masts are massed along the shore they look like a thick grove of rushes. The men who trot along the planks to the shore with the grain sacks are spare,

copper-coloured fellows, themselves picturesque. So are the Bints who hang about for what loose grain they can pick up. I have seen artists sitting on the bank getting bits of the scene with a crayon or colour. One was sketching a steamer amongst the barges. He said he was going to call the sketch "The Usurper." It was the only steamer "on the run," and it was usurping the time-honoured functions of the barges. It was putting many barges out of commission. Old men who had been dreaming down the Nile on the grain barge since early youth were being ousted by this churning, intrusive thing that moved by new-fangled steam at a pace quite out of harmony with the dignity of any Egyptian traversing Father Nile. Beside, to put the human device of steam before the winds of Allah, given for purposes of Nile traffic, is an infidel thing. These English! may their house be destroyed for their blasphemy, and for their robbery of honest Moslems peacefully sailing grain for the nourishment of the Faithful! . . .

I have seen another artist trying (vainly enough) to get down the sunset that bathes the river and etches the palms of the other shore. The Faithful would probably curse him for his blasphemy, too, if they knew what he was trying to do: and with more reason. Men have tried to paint the Nile in the early afternoon and given it up—because

there is then no colour to paint. There is no colour anywhere in Egypt except at early morning and at evening. Egypt is all flat, glaring white during the day's length. But at its beginning and its end there is such a concentration of colour as intoxicates you. There is a foundation for the depth of colour in popular prints of Egyptian scenery that men in temperate climates deride. It is a strong foundation. The whole Nile reach is turned to rose—a deep rose-pink; the stone structures along the shore positively reflect colour; the old timber of the barges gleams a rich copper; the colour riots in the horizon; and when the sun has gone the glow lies over the Delta like the palpable dust of gold; it is as though the burnished air were granulated into an infinite fineness: it has become more than a vapour; the dome of heaven has become solid, and the air that fills it is a fiery dust.

But you visit Rod-el-Faraq, the village of *cafés-chantants*, at night. Only then are the cafés open—and only on summer nights. It is a long ride out by tram through the native quarter. That ride in itself has a fascination. It begins through Boulac; and Boulac, almost in the centre of Cairo, has the segregated air of a thoroughly native haunt. You will see there what you will see on the further skirts of the city, nearer to Rod-el-Faraq. The native cafés are aflame with

lamps and torches. The tarbushed natives are squatting on the benches about them inhaling the *naghali* and declaiming at each other. The haunting music of the single drum and wood-wind strikes the night: the staccato drum and the pipe follow you with a rhythm that persists in your head against the jolting tram. The flat carts of fruit and vegetables are being pushed about over swinging lamps. The vendors are crying their wares stridently and mournfully. The black-robed, hooded women, who never can sit in the cafés, are moving like dark, outcast ghosts with bundle on head or child astride the shoulder. The donkey-carts rattle over the stones, the drivers exhorting the pedestrians, to whom the road is a sort of pavement. The strains of the *khan-khan* music are emitted from blazing windows above the streets; these are so suggestive that you can visualize the belly-dance. The moon floods the street with a pale opalescence that is the atmospheric counterpart of the intoxicating sunset of the Delta. The light minarets gleam in it. The dilapidation of the crowded dwellings is lost. So is their filth. They are transformed into pearl-fringed masses. Their dilapidation only serves to increase the native irregularity of outline that makes the pile more beautiful in the luminosity of the moon.

Before reaching the river bank you pass between some fields of crop flecked with palm hods. Each

palm stem is individualized in the unnatural strength of the moon's light; it is crowned with the silver dust of the fronds.

But the river when you burst upon it gleams a broad highway of silver. The smallest craft upon it you can detect. The dharbiehs are lying in echelon along the Rod-el-Faraq bank behind the cafés, fairy house-boats, the internal light blazing at the tiny square windows along the brink of the water. They are lapped gently by the silver river. There is only a breath of air—just enough to dandle the gigantic triangular sails of the feluccas that lie between the dharbiehs. They lie there clean and cushioned, the boatman squatting on the prow soliciting you to use his craft to cross the river. Such is the clarity of the night that from the bank you can look down and be conscious of the blaze of the colour in the cushioned seats; for those cushions are as rich as the carpets of a private house. This is the most tempting of all river vehicles—this breeze-drifted felucca across the Nile under the summer moon. Cleopatra's barge was rowed, if I remember right. It is a pity. To ensnare Antony irretrievably, she should have cast aside her retinue that made a barge necessary and taken him in a sail-driven felucca.

But above the line of sleeping house-boats is the long line of *cafés-chantants* upon the shore,

with their backs to the water. They do not sleep ; far from it. They are very wide awake. They are blazing with light and with the colour of the tent-work roof and walls. There is an acre of small tables before the dais of each and beneath the lamps they are thronged. Here women do congregate. You will see them in no *café-chantant* in Cairo. But the thing you are to remember about Rod-el-Faraq is that it is pure Arab—untrammelled by European. We were the only people not Arab who used to visit it. So the Egyptians allow their women to come here. As you approach the cafés from the tram-terminus you will see the queue of gharries that have brought Egyptian women from Cairo to sit here and sip coffee and listen to the music.

The cafés are set in groves of eucalypti that gleam in the blaze of lamps. Before them moves the stream of vendors of nuts, cakes and fruit. Their faces glow in the concentrated light of the lamps they bear on their tiny carts. Here they keep to the road. Within the café area the waiters do all. This seems another mark of the pure Egyptian pleasure-house. In the cosmopolitan cafés of Cairo you are tormented by the hawkers that infest them continually. Here the waiter is supreme.

But it is, of course, the stage that engages you. There are perhaps a dozen performers there in a crescent. On the flanks sit the instrumentalists.

There is one lady in the centre ; between sits the chorus. The lady is the cynosure of all eyes. She may or she may not wear a yashmak. She may or may not have an instrument. One thing is certain ; she is the soloist, and the only one there ; and she is conscious of the importance of the position. If there is singing in chorus she leads it ; but for the most part she sings stanzas alone, to which the men add a chorus.

She is enormously fat. I suppose girth is one of the essentials in an Egyptian *prima donna* ; a good voice is another. But she must be fat. For she must be handsome, to attract the mob ; and no Egyptian woman who is not fat could be considered handsome. She sits there dressed low and short-skirted, with her legs wide apart. She never crosses her legs and she never stands to sing ; none of the company does.

She has a voice of a piercing shrillness. There is a nasal quality in the voice of the Egyptian public singer. It is partly through the nose that they achieve those delicate intervals of which Western music knows nothing. A Western ear can just detect them—and marvel at them ; but a Western voice could never give them out.

These fine gradations of interval are one striking feature of Egyptian singing. Another is the way in which it—and especially the chorus—“flows on.” In this respect there is something Handelian

about it ; but the rhythm is, of course, less regular in pattern than the Handelian rhythm. But again and again it reminded me of the more fugal and liberal recitative of Handel. That, I think, is the most accurate comparison that could be made with it—the comparison to Handel's recitative in some of the oratorio.

And I should have said that there is a wailing element in almost all the vocal work. But you are not to infer from this anything mournful in the themes. It is a wail according to the Western notion. It is far from denoting anything melancholy in the subject. But then you are deceived, too, by the agonized expression of the chorus ; they lean forward, put a hand to the ear, and contort the features as in pain. But these choruses are always succeeded by such bursts of amused applause, and the features of the singers afterwards relax into such facetious grins, that this agonized expression during the performance is either necessary to the mechanics of their vocalization or is assumed to heighten the facetiousness of the theme through the sense of contrast.

Lewdness—as ever—is the basis of Egyptian facetiousness. I have had translations of some of these café choruses. There is nothing virgin-minded in them. You can see this, too, by the way in which the singers themselves are sometimes convulsed by their themes. None but a lewd song

could so double up a company of Egyptian performers. You can judge it, too, by the way the waiters sometimes halt in their service, forget it, and join in the frenzied applause of their patrons. This is more than informality. It is the appeal to the native prurience that "gets them." I have seen the whole service suspended until an encore was demanded and done with. Very informing, then, would be the loose grin that overspread the features of the lady at the close and the final guffaw with which it culminated.

There is just one open-air theatre at Rod-el-Faraq—right beyond the series of cafés. It is always melodrama they play—replete with blood and lust. It is not near so interesting as the performances of the café. It is in the heart of a grove of eucalypti. The stage is trailed with vines. The orchestra is one decrepit piano. The children climb upon the stage to get a closer view. The crowd smokes and masticates and gulps drinks audibly. For no one can sit here without buying; and it seems to be the custom to come here for refreshment rather than entertainment.

We always returned to the cafés from here. They are more subtle than the theatre, where, at the last act, the stage is always a sort of abattoir. Sometimes we took a felucca across the river; but more often we returned the way we had come—through Boulac, where the midnight revelry was in progress on the fringes of the deserted streets.

CHAPTER II

ON LEAVE IN CAIRO

IT is the Cairo Australians knew on leave in the days of "peace" most of them will recount at home. One man used to say: "It is worth all the hardness of the Jordan Valley to get into a gharry at Cairo station and just drive down to the Continental with the prospect of ten days' leave." Days in the Mousky; nights under the moon at the Pyramids; afternoon tea on the piazza of the Continental, and the drive round Ghezireh Island after; tea at Groppi's; nights at the Kursaal and the ensuing supper in one's room; Sunday afternoon on Rhoda Island; the Saturday evening dance at Shepheard's; the symphonic concert at the Kursaal on Sunday morning; yarns with old friends at Headquarters (who are never too busy to yarn); life in the *pension*—for those who choose it before a hotel; car-rides to Helouan with Australian Sisters; Sunday afternoon visitation of old English residents at Ma'adi, who were so good to our fellows in the days of '15;

encounters with guides, with the street vendors of sticks, beads and postcards; wrangles with gharry-drivers; visitation of civilian friends in the wonderful Moorish city of Heliopolis; tours of the citadel at late afternoon, whence one looked down from the Bey's Leap on Cairo under the setting sun; *soirées* in the homes of French and Syrian friends; visits by felucca or by train to the oasis of the Barrage with its canals and its gardens that are concentrated Delta foliage; half-days at the Zoo; tours of the rich mosques—all these they will remember for ever. And some will even want to come back and know them all again long after they have settled into the quietude of their Australian homes.

Most English officers visiting Cairo shun their Headquarters at the Savoy Hotel, as a depressing home of Formalism, Red-tape and aggressive Discipline-in-Detail. But Australians from the field love to pay a visit to their Headquarters in the Sharieh Sharwarbi Pasha. That old Hôtel Victoria, with the slouching sentry at the door and the irregular string of berseem-laden gharries in the street before, invites them to go in and "have a yarn." So they do; and they always enjoy themselves—everyone is so glad to see them—the Commandant himself, a thorough Bill-Jim, to whom you need not be announced by the orderly, most of all. In fact, the Commandant loves a yarn

more than business ; he is always glad to have an officer from Palestine “pitch a tale” of the Valley or Richon. And the D.A.A.G., D.A.Q.M.G., Camp Commandant, may wait outside his door the while to get things signed, or to confer on moot problems as long as they like—or dislike ; the Commandant is too good a sport to interrupt the narrative of the Low Boy within, relating his adventures at Surafend or Richon. It is a good sign, this. The Commandant is intensely human. He gets through his work, but he never loses his interest in matters not official. He is a man of enormously quick and dogmatic decision. He lives with his wife in a dharbich moored beside Ghezireh Island, as many of his Headquarter officers do. He will take a day—or two—off for pigeon-shooting ; but he comes in next day and works like mad to clear off arrears. The English have an infernal habit of sticking to their offices whether there is work to do or not. They have no capacity for going off when things are slack and working in spurts when they are busy. The consequence is, stodgy and formal decisions coloured by King’s Regulations and the Text-book. Strong common sense never takes an independent lead with them, overruling King’s Regulations—and everything else laid down. This is no way to conduct a war at the Base. At the Savoy, when you go to consult a department, you have to get

through a barrage of orderlies, corporals, sergeants, sergeants-major, to the *sanctum*; and when you do get there you find some subaltern who receives you in a lofty manner. If anyone wants to settle a matter with A.I.F. Headquarters, he walks in unannounced to the Commandant, and in five minutes gets a ruling highly charged with common sense and with no smell of K.R. about it.

The informality of the whole place is refreshing. Bill-Jim clerks move about the passages with coats off and sleeves up as though they meant business—but they are never too busy for a bit of repartee *en route* or an interlude of horseplay. A half-dozen waleds rush about the corridors dispensing tea to departments. They do it all day. The Australian clerk drinks gallons of it whilst he works. And whilst he works he does work—tears the heart out of the job; and when there is no work to do he plays poker with his friends in the office until some turns up.

Nursing Sisters enter the Savoy in fear of their lives. They come into Australian Headquarters as into a home of friends. And they are received there as women ought to be. The A.D.M.S. is genuinely glad to see them. They come to him as to a big brother, have tea in his office, address him by his convivial nickname of W—, tell him their troubles, and get them laughed over and smoothed out. The way in which some English

M.O.'s—and especially the administrative branch of them—treat English Sisters is beneath contempt. This is not universal in the English Army; but there is a great deal of it. Some men have no conception of the psychology of a woman mixed up in war. Their mechanical attitude towards men is depressing enough; but towards women it is past forgiveness. The day of reckoning will come, when not only English privates, but English Nursing Sisters, too, will reveal their military wrongs to an astonished English world.

But that A.D.M.S. is a wonderful man to others beside his Sisters who confess to him. His clerks and his officers are all his friends. They are his equals; but they get the work done. They hobnob with him; but they will work their souls out to get the business of the department through. He calls them all by their Christian name; but they would as soon die as presume upon the familiarity. "Loyalty" is a smug word; but it is the word that applies; it is the loyalty that follows on just and friendly and human treatment.

But beside the A.D.M.S. I would I could show you the Brigadier who is acting in these Headquarters as G.O.C. A.I.F.-in-Egypt. He is a man with whom formality does nothing. Officers disappointed of promotion who are "sore" may go in to him and argue the point on equal terms. If they are wrong his strong, unprejudiced sense

soon shows it them; if they are right he will admit it and give them justice. But the point is they are allowed to go in to him and argue without prejudice either way.

It is a treat to see him move into his work in the morning. "A fine figure of a man" is he—a redoubtable boxer in his youth. He has the figure of an athlete, though growing stout, as most vigorous athletes do after middle age. But he looks everyone in the eye in a friendly way. He greets his old friends who are privates in Headquarters with a cheerful word and the Christian name as he goes upstairs.

He it was who, in the field, very thirsty, and without badges of rank, entered a sergeants' mess and demanded beer. He was unrecognized as the Brigadier.

"Want a beer," said he.

"Go on; you a sergeant?" asked the orderly.

"Yes—farrier-sergeant." . . .

He told them after who he was.

Groppi is the morning resort after a leave-visit to Headquarters. Without great difficulty some member of Headquarters staff can be persuaded to come too. There is a line of gharries about either Groppi entrance—gharries that have delivered loads. In the entrance-room you will go round the cake-baskets with a fork and plate, harpoon what you like best, and give it to a waled to

follow you into the garden. In that pleasant garden you can bask under the great Groppi tree for hours, long after tea and cake are done with. It is thronged with the leisured Tarbush whose hardest work is to dawdle the morning away in Groppi's. During the war in Egypt it was a sort of Nationalist headquarters. Committee meetings were held there. So well known was this that one day the garden was raided and every Tarbush "gone through"—for arms, for incriminating papers. Thereafter, for some days, Groppi's was closed, and the conspirators herded elsewhere. But before the war in Cairo, Groppi's was at its best from five to seven in the afternoon. It was the most famous rendezvous in the city. It was considered "the thing" to go to tea at Shephard's; but only by the aristocrats. Groppi's at five was the rendezvous of Democracy. The democratic Tarbush dominated. But, beside, the soldiers were there—colonels and privates; the French and Syrian mothers with families; the young lovers—French, Greek, Syrian, Italian and all; the women of the Cairene English colony who had emerged from the exclusiveness of their Ghezireh-land to mingle with the herd, risking contamination for an hour. If you wanted to meet anyone about-town (military or civilian), and were not sure of their domiciles, you went to Groppi's for tea; and if you did not see them there you would be sure

to meet someone who could help you run them to earth.

It was a meeting ground, rather than an eating ground. People went there for conversation rather than for other refreshment. And to anyone fond of "watching people," it was endlessly interesting any afternoon to spend an hour there alone, looking on at the cosmopolitan throng. If you went at five in the summer you would be sure to sit on till eight under the lanterns, looking on the mere colour and animation of it.

The hawkers were not allowed to invade Groppi's. Only the Levantine-looking fellow in mongrel naval uniform who sold cigarettes had the *entrée* to the garden. To know the hawkers you must go to an open street-café near the Continental or Shephard's and buy coffee. Apart from the boys who attempt surreptitiously to black your boots as you sit, you will be invaded by the fellows who sell—sell canes, lottery tickets, matches, cigarettes, melon, mangoes, iced cakes, nuts, postcards, pigs' trotters, necklaces, prawns, newspapers—all that heart can wish. "Buy a stick, Mister Capten! Good rinossus hide—very cheap—half-a-price—very nice—very good—very cheap—very clean!"

"Brush-a-boots, Mister Officer!—very good shine!"

"Cigarettes, Sair—very good cigarettes—very

cheap ambar cigarettes—make you feel happy and joyful at the same time ! ”

“ Lottrie—Lottrie ! ”

“ *Mairl !—Gypsen Mairl !*—very good news !—all Australians go home !—very good news !—*Mairl* to-morrow ! ”

“ Want-a wax matchis ?—wax matchis, Mister Capten—five hundred—very good ! ”

Sitting there, besieged, looking out on Opera Square, you will see sights possible nowhere but in the capital of Egypt.

A couple of camels pass, laden with berseem, through the heart of the city, gyrating their pendulous lips, glancing from side to side of their horizontal heads with an expression of ownership that gives you a feeling almost of intrusion.

A flat, narrow donkey-cart passes full of Bints, regarding you from behind their yashmaks. They are a middle-class harem taking the air. They may even be the harem of the poor man who trots beside the donkey, urging and exhorting him—and exhorting the passengers to clear a way for the colony of wives he is transporting.

A waled passes with a goose under his arm. The bird escapes and waddles flapping round the chief square of the city under the very nose of the equestrian Ibrahim Pasha. A policeman joins in the pursuit and eventually makes the capture. Then he raises it with an appraising hand and

notes the weight, asks the price, and enters on a bargain with the owner for its purchase.

To the Australian in the Jordan Valley Sunday was as any other day. But Sunday in Cairo has a flavour of Sunday. Only on Sunday morning may you have the orchestral concert at the Kursaal. Though the Kursaal is not a church, the symphonic concert is purely a Sunday institution. And it is better attended than any church. It is as cosmopolitan a gathering there as you get at Groppi's. In fact, it is almost a replica of the Groppi personnel—excepting that there are fewer children there, and that the yashmak, which never frequents Groppi's, is ubiquitous in the galleries. Part of the Sultanic harem is almost always there ; you can see the fair houris behind the close wire-mesh of the Sultanic cage in the first tier. They pretend they have privacy ; but you can decipher their features within this grille. It is good music—the music of Wagner, Saint-Saëns, Beethoven, Elgar. Cairo is full of Southern Europeans and Levantines who know how to play cunningly upon the stringed instrument.

Before lunch everyone goes to Groppi's for exhibition, conversation and refreshment. The gayest Groppian hour of the week is that before Sabbath luncheon.

A man is sore distracted to choose what he shall do on Sunday afternoon : “ Shall I go to Ma'adi

or Helouan or to Rhoda Island or to the Barrage, or shall I just sit on the Piazza and 'watch,' and afterwards go to a quiet *soirée* in the house of Mme — ? ” These are the questions that perplex.

To go to Ma'adi to the house of Mrs. D. is to visit a pure English colony. Everything in Ma'adi is English—houses, gardens, householders, streets—everything except the servants. The Gyppo *suffragi* is all that dispels the delusion that you are in a London suburb. In the garden of the —'s you will sit amongst the English roses and take an English tea, and talk of the things of England and bask in the most delicious English hospitality. And after, you will repair to the drawing-room and hear the waltzes of Brahms played as they are played in England.

Only the prodigal take a car to Helouan. Beside, the route of the train is so beautiful—through Old Cairo and out under the sandstone hills that look across the Nile into the blossoming Delta. The fringe of the Mokattam Hills, with the perching citadel and Mosque of Mehemet Ali, is in your view all the way. Through this atmospheric medium the crowning mosque takes on hues of pale pink and grey that transform it into an unearthly fineness. The Mokattam Range is all opalescent. Through the palms that fringe the Nile on the other side you may see the black triangulations of the Pyramids. At Helouan you

will take tea at the Summer-house Hotel and walk after, at sunset, up the hills behind the village and see the silver Nile, palm-fringed, for a hundred miles threading the green sea of the Delta—and all thirteen Pyramids. It is the best view about Cairo, by far.

A good vehicle to the Barrage is the felucca. But it is too slow to let you enjoy the Barrage. The train is fast enough ; a car is too fast. Neither train nor car gives you the river. A steam launch is best of all. It will go up in two hours. If you leave in time to take lunch in the Gardens you may have four or five hours there. You cannot do with less.

You skirt Ghezireh—that garden-city peopled by Anglo-Egyptians of a quality it puts you in the dress circle to sail within miles of. You pass Rod-el-Faraq and see it for the first time from the water—see its grain-boats, its thicket of masts, the blind river-wall of its cafés, its eucalyptus groves. Choubrah, that canalized village buried in plantations, you leave on your right. It is pure Arab, that village ; it was a formidable place during the war in Egypt.

You pass barges of merchandise from Upper Egypt creeping along under their own sails. There are queues of barges, too, dreaming along in the wake of an I.W.T. tug. There are feluccas full of Egyptians out for a river picnic.

The Barrage Gardens and Ma'adi are the two

bits of England about Cairo. The Barrage lawns, Barrage shrubs, rockeries, patterned beds of flowers are English in their lay-out; only there are some tropical blazes of colour that disenchant you—and enchant you, too; for you will get nothing so brilliant and prodigal in England.

You must not leave the Barrage without that trolly-ride to the station and back. Two sweating Gyppos trundle you along through three miles of garden and over bridges adorned with those towers that remind you so strongly of the towers of England—even remotely of those very towers upon the Tower Bridge of the Thames.

You have tea in the restaurant among the shrubberies, if you are formal-minded. If you are out to enjoy yourself you will have a waled bring it to you on the lawn, and you will squat to it; and if you are out to be amused you will choose a patch of lawn overlooking the arriving-place of the cars from Cairo—so that you may watch the coming of those aristocrats who visit the Barrage for display and not for enjoyment. And on that lawn amongst the shrubs you will see some pretty and unpremeditated love-making.

But the richest part of the afternoon is the journey downstream to Cairo when the sun is setting and transforming all the river. When you came up at noon everything was explicit about you. Now, all is suggestion.

CHAPTER III

THE TWO LEAVES

“FRANCE is a fair —— !” — “Palestine’s a —— !”

It is in terse phrases of this kind that the Infantryman and the Light Horseman are accustomed to give a concentrated opinion of their respective fields. And for those who know both countries in war-time, each is perfectly true. But there’s no comparing them. They have nothing in common. France has the more intense and ceaseless fighting ; Palestine the more intense discomfort. France offers endless variety in the country and people of its war-zone ; the monotony of Palestine is hideous.

The lot of the Digger and of the Horseman acquire nothing in common when leave comes. If the one goes to London and the other to Cairo, they are separated by more than distance—by as deep a gulf in atmosphere as though they still infested the Somme and the Jordan Valley respectively.

The difference begins with the journey towards the enchanted City-of-Leave. The Digger en-

trains for Boulogne. With luck he has some companions; not always, because leave is a bit scarce, and he finds himself sometimes in a part of the war-zone from which a leave-train does not run. He may then be inhabiting a third-class compartment with a company entirely civilian. But this will not bore him. He gets on well with the French—amazingly well. There is an extraordinary sympathy between the French and the Australian—far stronger, in general, than that between the English and the Australian. The Australian is intensely domesticated. He wouldn't admit it; but he is. Where English soldiers spend night after night in estaminets drinking rotten French beer, the Australian seeks out his French family with whom he is a friend of long standing and spends his evenings there—playing with the kiddies and “kidding up the 'demoiselles a treat.” There is no implication here that he cannot drink French beer too. But he more often gets it with the family than from the estaminets. And if he is not in the house, he's walking out with the family. The Digger is extremely faithful in these friendships. He wears well as a friend of the French. If he comes back in the old area to rest, he does not forget his old friends. Neither do they forget him. The French like this consistency. It is a libel that the French are fickle in their friendships, just as it is untrue

to say that in France family-life is dying. On the contrary, there is as much natural affection within the French family as in any family on earth.

But the Digger was on his way to Boulogne to get the leave-boat, making good with the "civvies" in the carriage. The nearest the Light Horseman comes to traversing the water to get his leave is to run across the Canal.

At Boulogne he will probably stay a night. Unless he has come down in a leave-train he will give the rest-camp "a miss" and put up at a decent pub.—and get the first sleep that he has had between sheets for many months.

The run to Folkestone is very short—much shorter than the run by train to London through the hop-fields of Kent and the pleasant country of Southern England. It is not as deep a contrast to him to run over this beautiful land, after France, as it is for the Light Horseman to find himself in the Delta after the desert.

It's a curious thing that the Digger does not find himself so much at home in London, on the whole, as the Light Horseman in Cairo. There is an everlasting incompatibility between him and his London environment. Australian hats and tunics slouching about the Metropolis always brought me a sense of incongruity. They're out of their setting. Somehow the Light Horseman fits in better at Cairo—better with the informality

of dress and manner of the Egyptian, and even with the dry heat of Cairo, as distinct from the everlasting London murk. You can always raise a laugh with the Gyppo: he has a lovely sense of humour. You miss that lightness and irresponsibility in the denizens of the London streets. They seem to have caught a sombreness from their climate. There is something heavy and formal in the deportment of the citizens. Australians in London feel this so keenly that those who have no special reason for going there generally flee off to the more compatible atmosphere of Scotland—for the Scotch and the Australian mix well. A still greater number go to Paris or the South of France, where they seem quite at home. A great many go to Genoa, Rome, Naples, Venice, and loll about for two weeks in a climate that suits them down to the tendons of their hind legs. It is nothing to them that they understand not a word of the language beyond “Bong jorny!” and “Gratzy!”

The Digger in London is rather famous for his reckless expenditure on taxi-cabs and hotel bills—and for his tendency to take excursions into the outskirts of the city. When he doesn't go into the suburbs he mopes—that's the only word—hangs about Horseferry Road to yarn with his friends or plods up and down the Strand in the most disconsolate fashion, or leans against the

lamp-post on the street-island looking at the mob. He often takes long spells in conversation with the policeman directing traffic there.

Far dearer to the Australian than any number of St. Pauls, or Westminster, or Towers of London is a yarn with another bloke. Outside the Anzac Buffet at Horseferry Road you'll see at any time of the day a row of a hundred of them squatting on the low wall under the iron railings, smoking fags and talking fitfully. The stone wall about Trafalgar Square is another favourite haunt. The Australian is not a fluent conversationalist, and never was—thank God! Words are not cheap with him. His hat on the back of his head, his fag in the corner of his mouth, he converses jerkily, in chunks. A good deal of the conversation is shrewd and amusing criticism of passers-by. His wittiest comments are made off-hand, without a smile on his dial.

You don't find many troopers lounging about Headquarters in Cairo—except round the Pay-office. Light Horse troopers always seem to find something better to do. But there is no Mousky in London—and there is no street quite so amusing as the Wazza—and there are no London slums so interesting (in spite of the stinks) as the Cairene alleys. Nor are there any outside excursions so informal as you get on donks at the pyramids and Sakkhara.

All Diggers are not so unfortunate as to be

compelled to mope in London. Sometimes by accident, sometimes by introduction, they get into the homes of the English. Once they have done that, no hospitality is quite so kind, generous, and lasting as that of the English family. It beats the French. There are some Diggers who will bless for ever the day they got introduced into the bosom of an English family. There are few things so charming in this world. And once you have the friendship of English mothers and girls and younger brothers you can be sure it will last. The heavy, crushing formalism of London is public only. Within the heart of the English family there is little of it.

The man on leave in Cairo suffers hideously from the want of domesticity—so small is the English colony here, and so inevitably cliquish. This is bound to be so where the English colony is so largely the colony of officialdom. But I know some men from Palestine who have got to know English and French families in Cairo whose friends they will be for ever. But they are not many.

Of course, the Digger scores in theatres. The *revue* and the opera and the plays of London batten on the man on leave—and some of them are pretty good: some are not. Cairo, with its cabarets and cinema-shows and music-halls and *khan-khans*, is liable to leave a man rather starved of decent theatrical entertainment.

But the man in Cairo scores in grub. So tight is grub in England that there are more than a few Diggers who are actually deterred from accepting English hospitality by the scarcity of meat, sugar, fruit and butter. It's quite the custom in London now¹ for people visiting their friends for a few days to take a supply of sugar and margarine. You can't get an ounce of beef in a restaurant without your meat-card, and you can't get sugar there on any condition. The Londoners would give the eyes out of their heads for such meals as you can get in Cairo—with as much sugar, butter, beef, fruit and cream as you want. This is important; for going on leave is an exhausting thing and makes people infernally hungry. Living in Cairo will spoil the most abstemious for life in London at present.

There are air-raids, of course. Diggers on leave sometimes see exhibitions of fireworks that you'll never see in Cairo. But if you are caught in a tube station during a raid, the beauty of the fireworks that you saw is quite washed out by the filthy horde of stinking aliens that crowd into the tube-mouth and crush women and children in the effort to secure their own miserable lives. It's not they who get outed in a raid, but the decent English who have harboured them, and who wouldn't be caught dead in the same tube as they.

¹ This sketch was written in August, 1918.

CHAPTER IV

THE WAR IN CAIRO

NONE of us has known Cairo without its military context. The pure pre-war Cairo of the tourist and the Anglo-Egyptian is probably very unlike the Cairo we know. Perhaps none of us pines to know Cairo without its soldiers. We might enjoy the freedom of seeing it as civilians; but the Cairo we know probably amuses us chiefly because soldiers are in it: it is the combination of the soldier and the Gyppo that has produced most of the Cairene humour we love. And it is the humour of the place we shall remember longest—not its monuments. The humour of Cairo-at-Peace and the Great War in Cairo (which was not all humour)—these will remain as impressions with the Australian.

Cairo was the centre of that War-in-Egypt which spread to the provinces and sent Australians on active operations in the Delta and to the Upper Nile just when they were on the brink of repatriation. They had been concentrated at Rafa (in

“punishment” for the “Surafend affair”) and at Moascar and Tripoli, when suddenly the Nationalists broke loose, inspired by the deportation of their chief agitators, inciting the nation to strike for autonomy. They struck, in a sporadic and unorganized manner, tearing up street trees, breaking windows, looting, knifing and shooting the British—and especially the British soldier—and forcing a general strike of Government employés. Tram-drivers who attempted to “carry on” were mauled, and blinded with vitriol. The servants of Government Departments who attempted to go to work were either stopped forcibly at the doors of their offices or terrorized by threats in anonymous letters. In the provinces there were massacres of the English—and notably the butchery of a number of officers who attempted to escape by train from Luxor. There were private murders of English civilians in Cairene flats. Officers passing through the suburbs by car were stoned; and, when they got out and faced the mob, were done to death. English patrons of the big hotels feared assassination by the native servants acting in concert.

Troops were put on patrol in the streets armed with rifles and clubs. Armoured cars went about the city. The troops collided with the mob in most quarters. The armoured cars were fired on; they retaliated with their machine guns.

Troops were sent to the provinces. They took punitive measures, and the more aggressive villages were bombed from the air.

It looked as though Cairo would not be safe for months—and the provinces, perhaps, never. The deported leaders were released from Malta. This was the signal for the most dramatic demonstration of rejoicing in the capital. Processions were organized by the mob. They traversed the main streets in gharries and on carts, on tram-roofs, on camels, on donkeys. The ladies of the Wazza paraded on carts in their gauds and their chemises, with music and the *khan-khan*. The mob shouted: *Vive la liberté! Vive la France! Vive l'indépendance complète! Egypt for the Egyptians! Egypt for the Egyptians only! Vive l'Italie! Vive le Président Wilson! Vive everything but l'Angleterre*; and they carried the flags of all nations except the British—and including the Turkish. The release of their leaders was a victory for them. The whole demonstration was a threat: it was the equivalent of saying: "You have had to release our leaders. Look at our numbers and see what we could do if you don't give us all we ask: *vive l'indépendance complète*." There were attacks on the Turkish flag, and bloodshed. English soldiers made counter-demonstrations with the Union Jack and fought the Nationalists in the process.

All processions were prohibited. So the Egyptians had long and ostentatious public funerals of the victims of the collisions, and made processions of them—bearing flags, shouting their slogans and making the funeral the vehicle of quite open propaganda. It was hard to stop this; and it was not stopped until all the victims had been buried.

But the difficulties of strikes had yet to be met and overcome. The Special High Commissioner imported more troops to the city and issued an ultimatum that all who did not return to their posts on a given day would be considered as having resigned. Those attempting to prevent forcibly the return to work were dealt with by the augmented troops. The employés returned.

The Australians were sent to patrol the provinces. They did so, to some purpose. But there was sniping of them. At — two Australians were shot whilst patrolling the Canal. In the general flogging that ensued in that village many died of the laceration. This was the end of sniping. Inciters to revolt in the provinces and plunderers were court-martialled and flogged. It was very effective. Gradually the provinces were forced into quietness. Gradually the streets of Cairo became safe. Isolated murders ceased; it became unnecessary to wear revolvers to keep one's life; collisions with the troops were no more. President

Wilson, who had given a fillip to the movement by his Paris assertion of the rights of small nations, suddenly declared a recognition of the British Protectorate over Egypt and squashed all hopes of American assistance. The Nationalists considered he had "let them down." So the attempt at autonomy petered out.

In all this Australians were singled out as most to be feared. An active and special propaganda was organized against them. The "Fathers of the Feathers" they were called—in reference to their plumes. In the early days the Egyptians never would face a slouched hat; so they decided to "do the slouched hat in"—to remove the cause of the natural fear of Australians. But the propaganda had little success. The Australians had been warned of it, and were actively on the look out to combat it.

Cairo thus militant was a new world to Australians. They had been used to Cairo subservient and Cairo comic; but Cairo insurgent and serious baffled them. Still, if Cairo was looking for fight they were ready to give it. Two Colonials were knocked about passing through Choubrah in a car. That night Australians and New Zealanders massed in Esbekieh Gardens to the number of fifteen hundred and marched out to Choubrah with sticks and took revenge. Australians are not aggressive; but when one of their number is

“done in,” they will take measures of retribution in the manner of a primitive tribe. That, perhaps, is one of the reasons why they have a reputation for barbarism amongst some English. “We English are more refined-like. . . .” But, as a fact, punitive measures of this thoroughgoing character are a mark of the highest self-respect. They are the equivalent of saying: “We respect ourselves. If you kill one of us—you Gyppos—you shall pay a just and sevenfold price.”

But it is not the militant Cairo that Australians will choose to remember—though many will be forced to remember it as that which deferred so long their promised embarkation, and as that which was the death of some of their friends after the Armistice had been signed, when all seemed safe and sure of Home at last. Men who had cheerfully taken the risk of being killed on the Anzac beach had no mind to be “knocked rotten” on the Cairo Front “at this stage of the game.” But they were. Yet on the whole they preferred the movement and excitement of active operation in the Delta to languishing in the desert. They were happy to take the risks of sniping and scraping if only to escape *ennui* at Rafa, but one may be quite sure that all casualties were adequately revenged.

CHAPTER V

ARAB REVUE

THE Théâtre Egyptien, as everyone knows, stands in the same street as the Heliopolis tram terminus. A famous street that is in Cairo—a street in relation to which many a rendezvous is fixed. “Meet you outside Shepherd’s” is a common formula; but “You know the Heliopolis tram-terminus?” is a much more common saying when starting out to fix a point at which to meet. In that street stand all the theatres and cinema halls. That is the street that is fairly lined with gharries any night at ten-thirty, waiting for the theatres to disgorge. That street resounds every night at eleven to the cries of the hailers of the arabieh — “Osta! Osta! — ta’ali! — osta! — henna!” (“chief driver! — come on! — driver! — here!”); and to the hortatory shouts of the osta, once his fare is safely stowed, “Oa! — oa regellak! — enta, oa! — shemalak! — yemenak! — Enta! — oa regellak! — oa Bint! — oa Sheikh! — enta, waled! — Oa!” (“Hey! — mind your feet! — look out, you! — you on the left! — Hcy! — you on the right!

—Hey ! you, look out !—Hey ! lady !—old buffer !
—Hey ! young 'un !—mind your eye ! ”).

These exhortations may sound elaborate. So they are. But they are necessary. For you must understand that Cairo is not a city (as London is) in which wheeled-traffic automatically takes precedence in the street. There is no regulation of street-traffic ; and if any attempt were made at regulation, it would be baffled in this informal city. The main street is as much the property of the pedestrian as of the gharry at any time, but especially at eleven in the evening. Beside, there is the horde of khaki aiming to board the queue of Heliopolis cars. But they are only part of the seething crowd the theatres have vomited forth. No footpath would hold the concourse, even if the concourse were intent on keeping the footpath. For there is the Casino de Paris—that tenth-rate replica of the Folies Bergères ; the Piccadilly Theatre, which apes (with ill success) the Coliseum ; the Kursaal, where you may see musical comedy by the Bandmans of a quality better than you ever hoped for in Cairo ; the Salle Kléber—Printannia—Obelisk—Cosmograph—Radium—all cinemas, where you may see Charlie Chaplin's antics with explanatory letterpress on the screen in English, French, Greek and Arabic. And the Opera House has been emptied of its devotees of the Problem Play.

The Bints who solicit are standing on the pavement with the secret of the world's sorrow in their eyes. Some of these eyes look at you over the yashmak. But the owners of these eyes never speak to you—not in words. Those who say: "Goot nayt! How arr' you?" do not wear the veil.

The news-boys make most of their sales after theatre, rather than in the morning. The *Egyptian Mail* for next day is issued about ten. At the theatre doors the waleds are all waiting: "*Mairl!*—*Gypsen Mairl!*—*Mairl* to-morrow!—Goot news! *Mairl*, Mister Capten!—*Gypsen Mairl*, Mister Officer!—Goot news, dinkum!—*Mairl* to-morrow!—*Mairl!* . . ."

The bootblacks are not above offering to shine you in the fitful light and in that crowd which you can hardly elbow a way through. "Boots a shine, Mister Officer!—Brush-a boots, Sair!—Very good shine!—No good, no money!—Brush, Mister Capten!" All subalterns are *Capten* to the Cairene waled. If only the War Office would take notice! . . .

The solicitors of baksheesh after the theatre are mostly children—young children—sent out dressed (or undressed) accordingly. They dart at you from dark corners—little girls of six in tatters, filthy boys of ten with nothing but a loin-cloth in the cold winter wind. This undressing

of boys to beg at nights is a favourite winter pastime amongst the poor ; it probably leads to the death of some victims, for Cairo can be cold in December.

But all this is what happens after the theatre. As you approach the theatre at nine you will see little wrangling groups fighting for a squint through the holes in the wall made from the street by the curious indigent. The box office abuts upon the street. There are as many hawkers of nuts, toffee and sweets as buyers of tickets about the entrance.

It is a clamorous audience within—demanding the rise of the curtain by a rhythmic clapping of hands and tattoo of feet. If it is summer the roof is the open sky ; in winter, figured tent-work is strung across a skeleton of rafters. There is a fine gaiety in this mass of colour above the lamps. There is a simple division of the house : a row of boxes on the ground each side of the stalls ; benches for the *bourgeois* behind the stalls ; large and high rear gallery for the herd.

The herd is there, setting the pace in the clamour—with a large proportion of Bints. This is the only Egyptian theatre in which I have seen the yashmak in force. The whole front row of the gallery is peopled by yashmaks and gleaming eyes. The fine, white, transparent yashmak of the aristocrat is scattered up and down the boxes ; it is mostly the unveiled Syrians and Italians and

French that sit with their men in the stalls—with their men and their families.

The hawkers are busy administering preliminary refreshment. Trays of coffee are hurried round; flagons of lemonade disappear at a draught. You will understand how a pint of lemonade goes at a gulp when you see what these people are eating—large slabs of cake with soft, poisonous-coloured icing; long chunks of nut toffee which whole families are noisily crunching. You will see mother and father and the two children each with a slab six inches long held in paper sold along with the toffee to protect the fingers. There is no more embarrassment in buying a blatant slab of toffee than there is shame in the noisy and abandoned mastication of it.

Informality is of course the note of the performance when it does begin, as it is of the waiting audience. You will never have anything decorous in a Cairene native theatre. There is communication set up between the boxes and the stage at intervals—the performing ladies have their friends (and their fellow-artistes with “a night off”) in boxes; they emit appraising remarks on their work to individual performers. The performers, in the course of their work, acknowledge them by retorts and grimaces. Small bouquets are shied as marks of appreciation: these missiles are being hurled all the evening. There are boys in the

crowd who hawk nothing else. Hurling with vigour they are : the degree of vigour marks the degree of appreciation. I have seen a girl become a casualty on the stage through being hit in the eye with an admirer's bouquet. The ballet has to defend itself against these compact little bundles of flowers. Some of the girls are very adroit in catching them and saving their faces.

There are turns that incite to informality. For instance, there is a number which caricatures Cairene street cries. Street cries must be responded to by the audience : invitations to buy are met with a shower of coins that hurt or with loud cries of derision—according to the nature of the commodity that is being cried. There is a turn in which the donkey-boys enter with their beasts to solicit custom. In such a case it is chiefly soldiers who get incited ; I have seen them incited to hop on to the stage, take the performers at their word, and ride the donks clattering round the boards and out into the wings. Then there is the parade of Cairene lamplighters with their torches. These gentlemen are always actively amusing—on or off the stage.

There is, of course, the informality between performers. They are interested in each other's work in a curiously detached way. They criticize each other ; and they are often genuinely amused by each other. When the men's ballet that

impersonates Bints comes on, the real Bints on the stage can never resist it. And certainly there is something irresistibly comic in the spectacle of men, with men's gestures and guttural voices, wearing yashmaks and attempting a falsetto voice to accompany their belly-dance, which none but a Bint can do.

There is a little girl of eight amongst them—the pet of the company. She takes her part in dancing and in solo work during a succession of solos. She is petted in the most obvious way at the height of the performance—in an informal manner that is inconceivable on the English stage. She likes it, and responds to it with childlike abandon. Between the acts she is often sent before the curtain to sing. This she does with a mature rhythmical body-motion that brings down the house. Then the house pets her; and she responds to that.

If you know the vigour with which the Gypso carries on a normal conversation in the street, you can conceive the astounding vociferousness of his concerted singing on a stage; you can also conceive the declamatory gesture that accompanies all his singing, whether solo or in chorus. A chorus is a thoroughly gymnastic—as well as a vocal—performance. It is very loud: it is deafening. They vie with each other in producing noise. And in the use of gesture they vie with each other

too. There is no set gesture; far from it. If gesture is used on an English variety stage during a chorus it is approximately uniform; but never here. There is constant improvisation. And somehow each seems appropriate. It would be a strange sight to see an English soloist declaiming a song with gesture: it would be strange in Egypt if you did not. A Frenchman would do it; but to a far less degree. It is curious that in a country whose people are so inherently lazy there should be such vigour in ordinary speech and in the gesture that accompanies it. You might almost expect them to be too lazy to raise the voice above a monotone or to lift a finger in emphasis. I think the explanation must lie in the Oriental lack of self-control. The climate that relaxes the people into laziness relaxes them into incontinence too—incontinence of speech and act. The incontinence of street conversation, whether in word or gesture, is exaggerated a thousandfold on the stage of *revue*.

The inevitable moral incontinence appears. No Egyptian theatre would be patronized that did not exhibit it. There is the most intense lasciviousness—gestural as well as vocal—in songs and in dialogues. Though you comprehend little of the language, you can usually spot it by the performer's expression—but far more accurately by the peculiar quality of the burst of applause that

greet it. There is an unmistakable prurience in the manner in which the audience receives a lewd utterance from the stage. You can feel it at once. The degree and the quality of the licentiousness used in Egypt is almost incomprehensible to Westerners, and almost untranslatable into their tongue. The Egyptian mind preys on it, and thrives on it. Some performers are steeped in it. The outrageous thing is that, in general, the most lascivious performers on the stage are oldish men. I have seen an old greybeard on a Cairene stage who was worst of all—whose every gesture towards the girls there was full of a sexual signification. It amounted to a perversion—that this filthy old prurient, whose blood should have been cooled a score of years ago, should have been full of devouring sexual gesture. Even the free girl of the stage showed a repulsion of him—and sometimes a fear of him.

There is a good deal of French influence in the performance, as there is now in all things Egyptian. A little of the music is pure French, and some of the Arab words are set to a French lilt. But there is a lot that is deliberately Arabic in the music; for the Arabs who attend the place and know no French must be catered for. But one thing is certain: there is nothing English about it. The French temperament is far nearer to the Oriental than the English ever could be. That

is a good reason why the whole performance is intensely interesting to the English: it is so strange.

At midnight it finishes. As you move with the throng passing into the street, last efforts will be made to sell you toffee and flowers and cake. Ladies whom you never met before will invite you with an importunate hospitableness to go home with them; and some of them would make very pretty hostesses: you can see that behind the *camouflage* of the yashmak; but most of such importunate houris do not wear the yashmak—though where the yashmak does adorn the Magdalen of the streets it is a very passionate Magdalen. But you resist all such blandishments, buy a “*Gypsen Mairl* to-morrow,” and go home to bed.

CHAPTER VI

VILLAGE FESTIVAL

MRS. D—— invited me to come to her house at Ma'adi to supper, and to go on thence to the village of —, where lived her Sheikh—that is, the man who gives her lessons in Arabic. For he had invited her to the modest festivities arranged in his name to celebrate the coming of Peace: she might bring a friend.

We went with the more pleasure because there is disaffection amongst the Egyptians at present of a striking kind. Though the English are on the victorious side in the war, they have lost prestige with the Egyptians, partly through Nationalist propaganda. This festival, I suspect, in fact, was arranged out of homage to Mrs. D——, who is a sort of Lady Hester Stanhope amongst the Arabs of her district. In twelve years she had acquired an intimate knowledge of their language. This goes a great way: it brings them to her for discussion and advice. But, besides, she takes up the right attitude towards them. The attitude

of most Europeans towards Egyptians is dictated by preconceived notions about the fitting relationship between the denizens of Egypt and its European occupants. It turns on the positive supposition that all Gyppos are lazy, thieving and otherwise immoral—a thoroughly ill-founded assumption. On the contrary, it is in rare cases that the Egyptian will not live up to the assumption that he is honest, upright and industrious. That is the assumption on which Mrs. D— goes ; and she finds it pay. Incidentally, it makes her beloved of a whole community. It makes that community insist on her attending all their public gatherings.

She had three days before become a grandmother. She said that that day her Sheikh had come and asked to be allowed to make a gift to grand-daughter D—. He then produced a tiny Koran, beautifully bound, from which this woman-child was to draw wisdom when she grew up. Mrs. D— gave this among other instances of the large-mindedness of these people : that one of them should give into the hands of an infidel child a copy of al-Koran.

The village lay beyond the railway line. At the station we were met by the Sheikh and another, who talked most of the way on the honour our visit would bestow on the assembled company. We protested with great vehemence—at least, Mrs. D— protested for us—that the honour

was ours exclusively ; against which he counter-protested that we could not conceive, etc.

Arrived, we found a large caravanseraï full of waleds—not a Bint in sight : for women are never allowed to partake of public festivities. A congregation of turbaned men sat beneath swinging oil-lamps. The tarbush was almost absent—a source of no small relief. A tarbushed throng is a hateful sight—the associations are so strong of the tarbush with loose city youth and fat gross effendi. This was a provincial gathering purely and simply. One was conscious immediately of the wholesome fellaheen atmosphere of the place. There was a dignity and sedateness in this throng never found in the noisome gatherings of the capital. They had been feasting all the afternoon, these people, in the house of the schoolmaster ; yet there was no impression of their being gorged, and certainly there was nothing in the manner of anyone approaching intoxication. You felt they were content with simple pleasures, and the event proved you right. For the whole object of this gathering was to listen for three hours to a recitation of the Koran. If you can conceive an English audience coming together to celebrate Peace by a night of recitation from the Prophets (with not a drink all the evening), your powers of conception are abnormal.

We were received with a cordiality positively

embarrassing. About seven hosts—one official, the rest self-constituted—handed us to seats and introduced us to our neighbours, who touched brow and breast in greeting with an elaboration of Eastern formality. As soon as we were seated, they brought coffee perfumed with spices, and sweets and cigarettes. I had been armed with a box of the D—— cigarettes, which I passed round to propinquants. They were acknowledged with a gratitude quite disproportionate.

The chanters of al-Koran were from a Cairene mosque. Their sole business was to give recitals from the Sacred Book in public. The Sheikh volunteered that for this recital the Chief Singer would get eight pounds (which I disbelieve); and that had the function been more pretentious he would have asked twenty or so. He talked vulgar finance thus to show to what expense he would be willing to go to give entertainment to his English friends.

I found myself next an Egyptian in a tweed suit who spoke very ready English, and informed me disjointedly in the course of the evening that he was chief laundryman and tailor to the Kasr-el-Nil Barracks—that he also kept a coffee-stall on the Nile—that he knew all the English sergeants in Cairo—and that he would be pleased to receive me to tea in his village home any Sunday afternoon. He was the only man I could see in that gathering

with the flavour of the city about him. He wore a tarbush—that red badge of Democracy, the same for Sultan and street-urchin. Next to Death, the tarbush is the Great Leveller in Egypt.

The walls and roof of this place of rejoicing were made of that famous tent-work that you may buy from Ismail Omar in the Tent Bazaar—Egyptian symbol and ornate design in blues and reds and browns and yellows, on a white ground. It is the same as you will see in the roof of the Arab theatre in the Charieh Emad-el-Din, in Cairo. The chanters were seated in a sort of fenced bed upon legs. It was strewn thick with cushions. This was their dais.

One of the chorus began, squatting, with a modest chant from the Holy Book. No Oriental entertainment would give you the best first. Everyone knew that that man with the silken robe and the crooked walking-stick (and the nasty cast in his eye) was Chief of Singers and would come on later—and would stand to it. So the underling got little applause: everyone waited for the great singer. But before he arose the chorus had coffee and cigarettes. And at intervals of high frequency during the whole evening the host sent coffee to these energetic performers. They probably needed it.

At length the master-singer uprose amidst a burst of proleptic plaudits from the multitude.

These he acknowledged with a fitting coolness. Leaning on his crook, with a hand thrust in his gown, he began an invocation of the blessing of Allah upon the house of the host. This he improvised and uttered in snatches that were interspersed by a lusty rhythmic formula from the chorus, who, as the custom is when chanting in rhythm, pressed the left hand to the cheek. An Egyptian always lays the left hand to the cheek when singing—except when his hands are engaged in labour to which he is chanting. He gives the impression of “levering up” the sound. It is the same gesture as a European uses during a bout of neuralgia. And the visage of an Egyptian singing is generally as agonized as though he, too, were suffering the most acute neuralgic pains. And his higher register often resolves itself into a shriek or scream, as of agony. When the Chief of Singers warmed to his work he moved his left hand from its repose in his gown and pressed his left cheek as in a paroxysm.

I was much impressed by the subtlety of the rhythm of this music. It was entirely unaccompanied—except by the nodding heads of the infected audience and the accompanying body-sway of the singers, in whom the motion persisted long after the music had ceased. The whole contrast between English and Oriental rhythm always recurs when you hear Egyptian music.

In the latter there is no set pattern of rhythms. The stresses recur irregularly. It embodies the contrast between English downrightness, inflexibility and formality, on the one hand, and Oriental inconsequence and grace on the other. For there is no comparison between the gracefulness of the two types of rhythm. In Eastern rhythm is all the splendour and charm of irregular blank verse as compared with the mincing insipidity of the rhymed pentameter. National characteristics are embodied in either at every turn. Yet out of this rhythmic maze the unerring Eastern rhythmic instinct emerges triumphant. The four men of the chorus were always impeccably "together" at any stage of the rhythmic journey.

They are sound in wind for these journeys. Incredible lasting-powers they have: one breath only for the longest bout. You feel no European could do it. As far as I could judge, these respiratory powers were looked on as a standard of excellence by the audience. As the spasm lengthened out the applause began—until, as you began to feel the singer could hold out no longer without another inhalation, the applause became deafening. I could never quite decide whether it were a physical or a musical excellence that was being praised.

Whilst the chorus was waiting to break in with its lusty chant it applauded the work of the soloist

and checked impatiently indiscriminate noises in the mob. They always prefaced their part in this antiphonal performance by a gigantic inhalation.

The audience was rapt: one fellow in white I remember, who leaned eagerly with elbows on the dais verandah that he might lose no inflection. He would at intervals rise in rapture and seize the Chief Singer by the hand and commend him to the audience. During an interval for coffee he came to Mrs. D—— and said: “Lady, I would speak with you: I am a poor man.” “God is good,” said the lady in Arabic, “and generous” —in baffling tones. At this adroit rebuff to his inept appeal for baksheesh the audience burst into a roar of delighted applause. The old man retreated into his other-worldly appreciation of the art of the singers.

We had not seemed to be there an hour when it was eleven o’clock, and we were obliged to leave them to it. With many salaams and “saidas” and many congratulations of the gallant singers we moved out, escorted by lamps and a strong guard of hosts and sub-hosts and deputy-sub-hosts through the alleys of the mud-walled village to the station. “The night has been made more beautiful by your presence,” said the Sheikh. And we parted.

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